University of Alberta

Social Learning for Women's Empowerment in Rural Tanzania

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in International/Intercultural Education

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring, 2005

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Abstract

Women at the grassroots level rarely are involved in the development of solutions to their problems. As such traditional sources of their strength and capacity to make their own decisions are crippled and replaced with incapacitation and helplessness. This study, which is informed by Polanyi's theory of tacit knowing and Freirian notions of emancipatory education, assisted women at the grassroots level, who are adversely affected by inability to access and control agricultural land, to take part in a process of determining how to change their situation.

The research design included facilitating and observing women who engaged in a three-fold cyclical process involving collective learning through researching and analyzing information about their land tenure problem, collective action taking, and collective reflection that returned the women to further researching and analyzing more information. This social learning process provided a means for research participants to regain their ability to think for themselves and to recover their communal sentiments and collective wisdom as they progressively used their tacit knowledge to guide their actions.

This study uncovered women's unacknowledged potential in terms of intellectual and social-political abilities to deal with a problem that affected their lives. It revealed the women's capacity to empower themselves through their analytical skills, critical questioning, creative imagination, agency, solidarity and social networking. The researcher's role in stimulating dialogue among research participants was crucial in an attempt to tap their practical and experiential knowledge of the problem they encountered.

This study recommends combining the practical and experiential knowledge from the affected people with academic knowledge for effective reforms of women's land rights. It is hoped that the findings of this study will benefit women activists, community development practitioners, adult educators, policy makers and all concerned with solving various social problems facing people in rural communities.

Acknowledgements

From the beginning of my doctoral program to the completion of this text, I need to acknowledge the significant contributions of individuals along the way. First, I would like to thank Dr. Marilyn Assheton-Smith who gave me the opportunity and encouragement to start this journey and her unfailing support as my supervisor in producing this thesis. Her commitment was a source of inspiration and hope in the process of writing and reflecting on the issues and problems that the study investigated. It remains just a satisfactory gesture of expressing one's felt degree of gratitude with "thank you" to such a person who did not only the routine supervision of offering academic guidance but would go an extra mile to express her compassion. Thanks Marilyn for your mentorship.

I would also like to extend my deep appreciation to the wonderful, supportive Supervisory Committee Members, Dr. Sue Scott and Dr. Naomi Krogman who provided invaluable assistance and direction to contribute knowledge through research and to finish well. I am thankful to them for having patience to read this thesis and also for providing insightful comments. I am also deeply grateful to Dr. Carolin Kreber for her support academically and morally, her encouragement and challenge. Throughout the period I worked with her I found her to be someone I could communicate with and lean on through thick and thin.

I also wish to extend my appreciation to the Department of Educational Policy Studies for providing financial support, which made it possible to carry out my program of study. I also acknowledge and thank The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International for supplementary financial support. I would like to thank FSIDA and Research for Poverty Alleviation in Tanzania (REPOA) for providing funding which made it possible to travel and carry out this research study in Tanzania, which would not have been accomplished without such additional assistance. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all people who participated in the study as respondents.

Many people have made this thesis possible. The many friends who formed Edmonton and University of Alberta a comforting place for me and provided me with intellectual support and an environment that was conducive to study, I remember you all with a deep sense of gratitude. I would finally like to register appreciation to my beloved son for his relentless support, love, faith, and patience. You tolerated my stress throughout the period of my study program. Your sacrifices have been greatly appreciated.

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Prologue

Ten years ago, I was offered a position to coordinate seed production activities at the Ministry of Agriculture in Tanzania. Two years later a man was appointed to take over the position that I occupied. The head of the department, a man, said to me, "Christine, we had to look for someone who will take the position of a Seed Coordinator permanently, because you can never tell with women; today they are here and tomorrow they are no longer t\here". Without demanding any further explanation, I passively accepted the remarks. One thing that I could not understand was the preconceived ideas about my "unpredictable and temporary availability" and the generalization of this preconceived temporary nature for all women. While I was pondering about the cause of my so-called 'unpredictability', I came to remember the conflict between my three aunts (my mother's sisters) and my maternal uncle over a piece of land. I perceived the problems that my aunts encountered to be similar to my situation. Below I would like to share with readers of this manuscript an account of my aunts' situation, which was a source of inspiration for me to explore and understand the world's persistent gender disparities.

My maternal grandfather, by the name Seng'endo had a farm, about 20 hectares in size. He lived with his elderly wife Mang'endo and could not do much farming as age was catching up with them and they could not afford to hire labor. They produced only food crops like maize, cassava and sweet potatoes, mainly for subsistence. Eventually, Seng'endo's three daughters, Mamzigwa, Mamtanga, and Nenkondo, who lived in the city, decided to move to their home village after their retirement. They settled at the village and assisted their ailing parents with the farm work.

Mamzigwa, Mamtanga, and Nenkondo developed the farmland with the financial aid of remittances that they received from their sons and daughters. They managed to purchase a tractor from the church and hired permanent labor to do farm work. Therefore the farm expanded and consisted of permanent crops like coconut trees, mango trees, and guavas. They also kept small ruminants and a small poultry farm in addition to food crops. Farm production expanded tremendously; they produced enough for household consumption and for the market. Since the farm was a family property, they were committed to ensure each of the family members received optimum returns from the farm.

When Seng'endo passed away my aunts called upon their only brother, Nkuya, who lived in the capital city to come back home and live with them at the village. In their letters to him they insisted, in kibondei "*Uya kaya, nkhatina mwegazi*;" meaning, "please come back home, now that our father is no more you are the only guardian we have." For Nkuya, going back to settle in his home village was the best option after his retirement. He wholeheartedly accepted the request. It was a mutual agreement and the siblings were happy about the decision. However, Nkuya's return to the village brought many changes to Seng'endo's family.

The changes began with the operations of the farm activities. In particular he wanted to take control of farm management. He was aware of the financial support from his sisters' sons and daughters for the development of the farm. Yet he ordered the sisters to stop any further farm development, and to stop selling the products from the farm. He made these demands with the justification that the farm belonged to him.

and the only heir, his son, Dango. Nkuya's pronouncement was the beginning of a persistent, serious conflict between him and his sisters. They quarreled endlessly. Whenever they quarreled Nkuya used to tell them in Kiswahili, "*Kamfufueni baba yenu, aje awape haki ya kutumia hii ardhi ambayo kwa sasa ni yangu*" - that is, they should resurrect their father since he is the only one who has a claim for that land and who can extend use rights to his daughters!

Mamzigwa, Mamtanga, and Nenkondo felt that Nkuya's demands were unjustified. They had been working on their father's farm for years. Actually they felt they favored their brother by offering him a chance to come and settle at home rather than living a lonely hopeless life in the city with no money for a decent life. With Nkuya's insistence that the sisters should stop making any decisions pertaining to farm operation and management, eventually, Mamzigwa, Mamtanga, and Nenkondo succumbed to Nkuya's demands. They stopped working on the farm because they could not justify investing their time and effort on the farm without reaping the benefits. Regretably, Nkuya was incompetent in the farming enterprise. He mishandled the investments and essentially ruined the whole enterprise. Since no one worked the land, the farm was transformed to a barren land. It is pathetic that the land that Mamzigwa, Mamtanga, and Nenkondo used to produce food for consumption and for the market has turned into a barren land. Hence the once well-to-do Seng'endo's family became a poverty-stricken household.

What can we grasp from this account? Despite the time and effort Mamzigwa, Mamtanga, and Nenkondo invested to develop their father's farm, their situation changed with the untimely death of their father. The three sisters perceived their family to be incomplete without a male head of household. They were so preoccupied with filling in the gap that was created by their father's death that they could not speculate on the repercussions of having their brother as the head of the household. On the other hand, Nkuya, bestowed with decision-making authority and the ability to define priorities by virtue of being the only brother in the family is, in Giddens (1979) language, an "authoritative resource". Nkuya used the authoritative resources that he possessed to prevent the sisters from farming and pursuing their interests. In other words, Nkuya was able to exercise power over his sisters who were at that point disempowered. Were the three sisters oblivious of their real situation?

Chapter One: Framing the Question

Because of the episode described in the prologue I developed an intense desire to explore the magnitude of the problem of women and their rights to agricultural land in African countries. For my master's thesis I conducted documentary research to understand the real situation in Tanzania. What struck me most from my research results was the fact that more than 80% of women in patrilineal societies of Tanzania were facing similar problems, problems of land alienation and discrimination (Mhina, 1998). Apparently, the literature concerning women farmers and the terms of their access to land has grown remarkably over the past decade, grown partly because 'the problem' of women's access to land has been so difficult to resolve. So for my doctoral work I turned to this problem again, seeking to determine if women themselves, 'grassroots' women, could understand their problem and begin to find ways to address it.

Background of the problem

Over much of the African region, patrilineal control over land remains the rule and a number of analysts have clarified the gender impact of indigenous African tenure systems (Meer, 1997; Cross & Friedman, 1997; Small, 1997; Migot-Adholla & John, 1994; Bruce, 1993; Mackenzie, 1990; Davison, 1988). They contend that the majority of African tenure systems give women access to land but not in their own right. Women can only have rights as wives or, in the case of divorce and widowhood, as daughters or sisters of males within their sanguinal families. More interesting is the fact that this position is not much different in matrlineal societies where inheritance rights may pass in the female line, but they usually pass to males, who control land just as they do in patrilineal situations (Bruce, 1993; Migot-Adholla, 1994).

Today, 'female headed- households' form an increasingly common social unit. The rising incidence of unwed mothers, the rising divorce rates, and the increasing scourge of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) have led to an increase in the number of female-headed households (FHH) in Tanzania. Due to customary practices, this category of women is estranged from the basic agricultural resource (land) from which they can make a living. Few of these FHHs have direct access to agricultural land; fewer even can exercise effective control over it. As such, the increasing incidence of FHHs has made the women's land problem even more widespread than it has been in the past.

Measures to address the subordination of women's rights to land at international, regional (sub-Saharan Africa) and national levels are painstaking. Advocacy on behalf of women that challenges discriminatory rights of inheritance, ownership and control of agricultural land began as far back as 1979. For instance, the 1979 FAO report of the Rome World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) recommended that measures be adopted to ensure that women obtain equitable access to land and other productive resources (FAO, 1984: v). This was a landmark recommendation for the international community, encouraging national governments, researchers and academicians to undertake measures to address women's marginalized condition, including their rights to land.

At the international level, the Women's rights Advocacy Program and International Human Rights law group have done a commendable job to raise awareness of the critical issue of inheritance rights of women in Africa (Africa Policy Information Center, 1999). Similarly, a group of West African women's rights organizations worked on promoting awareness and reforming women's inheritance rights in their countries (op cit). At the national level, various governments are struggling to adopt policies that will enhance women's rights to land. Despite the law reform campaigns and other government policies that have been geared towards enhancing access and control of land for women in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa, women's subordination in issues of land is still rampant.

Tanzania was actively engaged in debates about reforming the land tenure structure around the early 1990s, however, gender problems as related to land rights remained unattended to mainly because of an oversimplification of the matter by policy makers. As such the issue of gender and land rights has received little attention in policy formulation as is reflected in the National Land Policy (NLP) of 1995. Actually the NLP acknowledged the problem of women's access to agricultural land but the proposal to ameliorate the problem is paradoxical. The NLP states:

> In order to enhance and guarantee women's access to land and security of tenure, women will be entitled to acquire land in their own right not only through purchase but also through allocation. However, inheritance of clan or family land will continue to be governed by custom and tradition (1995:12).

What the NLP is suggesting here is to maintain the status quo since a large part of the problem of women and land rights is due to customs and traditions. Evidence shows that over 91% of land in Tanzania is acquired (URT, 1994) through inheritance from the clan or family land. Is the NLP trying to ameliorate the women's land problem or perpetuate women's subordination?

The lack of clarity of these policy statements reflects the way these policies are implemented. For instance, the Tanzanian government established the Ministry of Community Development, Women and Children Affairs in Tanzania, in 1992, with the role of monitoring and coordinating women's concerns in the development process and to address basic community problems, especially those affecting women and children. However, there is no established link between the authorities at the Ministry level with women at the grassroots level. It is thus questionable whether there is any dialogue involved between the authorities and the grassroots women on the definitions of their needs or best means of meeting those needs. If little dialogue is involved how effective would the intervention programs be that are developed to address the marginality and powerlessness of grassroots women?

Similarly, gender progressive groups in Tanzania tried to challenge the policies on land reforms in Tanzania (Manji, 1998). In particular, women lawyers positively advocated for law reforms to give women tenure rights, arguing that successful repeal of the rules could only be attained by an aggressive campaign, which must be championed by women themselves (Gondwe, 1990: 17). In other words legal procedures were seen as a measure of addressing the problem of gender and land rights (Manji, 1998; Meer, 1997; Crossman & Friedman; 1997; Thorp, 1997). While women lawyers' input is significant, it is insufficient to address the complex issues of gender and land rights in Africa. A number of questions remain unanswered. For instance, how many people residing in rural areas are aware of their rights as provided for in land laws? How many rural people do exercise such laws? While the suggestion of women taking up the lead is valid, it is not known which category of women is considered here. Is it marginalized and subordinated women or is it women who are working "for" marginalized women?

The neglect of women's land-related concerns by governmental institutions and women activists in Tanzania mirrors a parallel gap within academic scholarship, where the relationship between women and their land rights is virtually unattended and little theorized. Studies completed by the Land Tenure Center of the University of Wisconsin focus on agricultural productivity (Gondwe, 1990; Bruce, 1993). Although the analyses incorporate gender, most studies neglect investigation of the possibilities of challenging power and authority and research processes allow little interaction between the researcher and the researched. While research concerning the impact of customary patterns on women farmers in Tanzania has spanned the last two decades (Tibaijuka & Kaijage, 1995; Tibaijuka, 1996) virtually no attention has been given to the involvement of women at grassroots levels in their struggles to ameliorate this handicap for women farmers.

Women at the grassroots level are not involved in struggles of solving the problem of marginal land rights, which they are facing. One of the reasons they are not involved is the fact that policy makers and development practitioners have their own vested interests and tend to undermine local people's capacity to decide on issues pertaining to their lives. Furthermore grassroots people are rarely treated as knowing what they need.

Paternalism and elitist, top-down approaches which were replicated from colonial structures, still guide the way governments and local agencies operate, which has an impact on local communities. Most commonly, the top-down approaches that are geared to solve people's problems draw little or not at all on the traditional or local knowledge, wisdom and insights of the rural people (Chambers, 1983; Toh, 1987). Officials have had a tendency to view people in local communities like children who needed others to protect them and decide what was in their best interests (Horton & Freire, 1990). As such, development practitioners and other government authorities tend to assume that they have ready-made answers for rural people's problems. As Rahnema argued, "As a rule we interveners, think we have the answers to the problems of the intervened… We are seldom ready to perceive them as possibly representing some form of wisdom" (1990:205). In this way local people's potential, their capabilities, their thinking and their knowledge are disregarded and disvalued (Fals-Borda, 1991; Rahman, 1991).

When experts go into a community with the answers; they are taking away from local people the opportunity to learn (Horton & Freire 1990). Experts who do not let rural women face up to their own problems create barriers against local people learning on their own. At the same time they cripple those people's capacity to make their own decisions (Horton & Freire, 1990). Park (1993) shares similar views:

> By not allowing people to make their own decisions, the traditional sources of human strength and capacity are taken away and replaced with incapacitation and helplessness. As a consequence people feel invalidated and useless, thus becoming more deeply dependent on the debilitating system (1993:16).

The "incapacitation" that Parks is referring to is reflected by local people's tendency to let experts decide things for them with the assumption that those who have acquired formal education are more knowledgeable about everything. In this way local people become non-participants in decisions that affect their lives. They wait for the government, non-governmental organizations or development practitioners to decide and act for them (Horton & Freire, 1990).

Having read this literature and after my exposure to these theoretical perspectives a question often came into my mind – why can't women be involved in solving some of these problems that they are facing? In what ways can they be involved in solving these problems? Majid Rahnema (1990) flashes some insights on how to answer these questions. First and foremost he views the existing difference between local people and the 'educated elites' as the main obstacle for reaching a sustainable solution. Rahnema argues that,

> The objective superiority we feel we have in the fields of our competence gives us the moral responsibility, if not a mission, to intervene, with a view to change them…. It seldom comes to our mind that perhaps we need to change, more than anyone else (1990:213).

The extent to which development practitioners can change, and the extent to which local women can be involved in solving their problems is still enigmatic and problematic.

In my curiosity to address the paradox between the conventional development approaches and 'local people's capacity to deal with their situations' I became motivated to work collaboratively with women in a Tanzanian village to identify possible solutions to the land access problem. However, my research did not focus on land problems per se, which was the focus of my Master of Science thesis. This research project then, was borne out of my concern to assist female heads of households, as the people who are most sharply affected by inability to access and control agricultural land, to take part in a process of determining how to change their situation. The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

- To create a space whereby rural women, who have been adversely affected by discriminatory rights to land, would have the opportunity to critically reflect on their land tenure problem.
- To examine the possibilities of gaining insights from research participants' experiences and perspectives on solving women's marginal rights to land

As these objectives indicate, my aim was to assist the rural women to actively take part in the research process, and to examine the possibility of affecting change through the research process. Research participants' ideas on how they encounter difficulties in accessing land, the causes of the problem and possible solutions to the problem were central to conducting this research study. The changing nature of their ideas as they worked together through time formed the core data for my analysis.

There are three assumptions that underlie this research project. The first assumption rests on the idea that 'no-one else intuitively understands one's problem better than the one who encountered the problem'. As I was contemplating on how to involve women in dealing with their problems, I read Freire who contends, "Human ignorance and knowledge are not absolute. No one knows everything. No one is ignorant of everything" (Freire, 1985:14). Similarly, Gaventa contends that, " the non-experts may experience a problem, and through that experience gain valuable knowledge and insights" (1993:29). In a similar vein Fals-Borda emphasizes the idea that through the actual experience of something we may "intuitively apprehend its essence; we feel, enjoy, and understand it as reality" (1991:4). It is in this perspective that I assumed that through the actual experience of being discriminated from their rights to land, rural women who have been affected by the land tenure problem would understand the problem of 'marginal land rights' better than anyone else who has not experienced the problem.

My second assumption draws on the first assumption. It is that those who have experienced the land use problem might have useful insights on attempts to solve women's land problem. Heron (1981) using the notion of 'experiential knowledge' opines that experiential knowledge involves more than just bare perception. He says, "reading the description of a place is never the same as getting to know that place through going there, exploring, and encountering it" (1981:27). With this perspective in mind I assumed that by having more involvement of those individuals who have experienced the reality of the problem concerned (marginal land rights), it is more likely that the research results will reflect that reality.

My third assumption draws on the premise that adults are capable of learning, changing and acting as responsible subjects in pursuits of answers to the questions of their daily struggle and survival (Tandon, 1988). With this perspective I assumed that rural women are competent but socially constrained actors who are capable of articulating what they know and taking responsibility to solve the problems they are facing. In similar vein Freire (1970) emphasizes the idea that it is necessary to trust marginalized people in their ability to reason. This faith is based on the belief that no person is devoid of knowledge.

Hence, this research facilitated and observed women engaged in a three-fold cyclical process involving collective learning through searching and analyzing information about their land tenure problem, collective action taking, and collective reflection that returned the women to further searching and analyzing more information. The group learning process provided a means for research participants to regain their ability to think for themselves and to recover their communal sentiments and collective wisdom. The researcher was able to document the process through which research participants became more aware of their problematic situation, more critical and more assertive, as an outcome of the group learning process. Consistent evidence in this thesis is that, women who are adversely affected by marginal land rights, are capable both intellectually and politically of handling their problematic situation. In particular, women based on their changed understanding of their situation, made decisions and took actions to come up with solutions to the problem. These women, throughout the research process used their own knowledge, often tacit, to guide their actions.

Organization of the thesis

Chapter one has set out the focus of the research and provided an overall background to the issue under study. Chapter two describes the attempts undertaken both at the national and international level to address women's land tenure problem. Chapter three presents the conceptual framework of the thesis. The chapter describes how tacit knowing and doing (through apprenticeship to societal traditions and activities) leads to accumulation of knowledge, and how knowledge is tacitly shared and communicated among people in groups. Chapter four presents the research methodology. The chapter begins with a description of a shift towards alternative ways of doing research, a brief description of the research site and methodological procedures employed to accomplish the study.

Chapter five to seven presents the data of the research work. Chapter five talks about women's disempowered situation the way research participants describe themselves. Chapter six presents robust dialogue among research participants as they critically reflect on the 'trigger story'. The trigger story is a concrete representation of women's problem, which was chosen to stimulate group members' discussion about the problem at hand. Chapter seven presents research participants endeavors to gain more insights from consulting other members of the community and description of their final decision about how to go about solving their land tenure problem. Chapter eight presents the reflections on the entire research process, in particular synthesizing findings of the research. This chapter also concludes the research work.

Chapter Two: Women's subordination in their rights to land

We live in a world of persistent gender disparity where women have less status, in terms of their access to social services and access to productive resources, when compared to men. Throughout the literature and official statistics the consistent message is that major gaps in policy, investment and earnings prevent women from performing to their full potential in social, economic and political life. According to the United Nations Human Development Report (1995), women still constitute 70% of the world's poor and two thirds of the world's illiterates. It is argued that women often work longer hours than men, but much of their work remains unvalued, unrecognized and un-appreciated. In the African context, gender hierarchy and female subordination have tended to be continual and increasing in intensity where women are marginalized within their living and their working conditions. Ascribed qualities, such as class, age, marital status, kinship roles and status as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters all intervene to create differences in power, authority and access to resources (Meer, 1997). The problem of women's rights to agricultural land reflects this reality.

Land whether inherited, allotted, or purchased, is the most basic resource of agricultural production in African rural communities. It provides the production possibilities such as the growing of food, other crops, fodder for livestock feed, trees, and vegetables, and keeping of livestock. In addition to its immediate economic importance, land in Africa is valued for other reasons. For example it determines social status and political power in the village and structures people's relationships with others. It also provides an avenue for social affiliations among members of a descent group or of specific rural polity (Okoth-Ogendo, 1993; Okali, 1983).

In pre-colonial African societies not every member had access to independent usage of productive resources (Migot-Adholla & John 1994; Davison 1988). Rather a group controlled defined territorial areas, predicated on the group's common descent. Households within the group had different degrees of claims to land. While an allocation of land for cultivation purposes was often made and controlled at the level of family unit an allocation for grazing purposes was a matter of concern for a much wider segment of society (Okoth-Ogendo, 1989). Men assumed formal jural rights over the land and at the same time organized women's rights to use household parcels (Migot-Adholla & John 1994; Davison, 1988). In most instances, and particularly because land was considered the patrimony of the lineage exercising control over specific territories, the extent of rights held by women was short-lived and did not include the defined attribute of security.

Women farmers in rural Tanzania are not in any better situation. In Tanzania an estimated 84 percent of the population ekes out a living from the agricultural sector (World Bank, 1994). Female labor in the sector constitutes 53.6 percent of the total (URT, 1995). With this substantial contribution, women farmers deserve to be credited not only for feeding the bulk of the nation, but also for helping the country earn much of its precious foreign exchange. Despite their crucial role as direct subsistence producers, they are disadvantaged in their access to agricultural productive resources. Agricultural productive resources here refer to those inputs necessary for agriculture production, which are comprised of agricultural land, agricultural extension services and credit facilities. Generally, women farmers in Tanzania receive little attention from agricultural research and extension services (URT, 1995; FAO, 1987). Women are rarely perceived as farmers. Part of the problem arises from the fact that extension workers are accustomed to dealing with a man, as head of household, rather than with a woman, as the primary person involved in agricultural production (URT, 1995; World bank, 1994).

Furthermore, the credit available to rural women farmers from formal lending institutions is negligible (URT, 1995; Saito, et al 1994). Their access usually is limited by the smallness of their agricultural enterprises and limited access to appropriate information. Often lacking collateral for borrowing from the bank, women must rely on their husbands if they want to invest in more productive ventures. The starkest reflection of the low status accorded to women farmers is the discrimination against them in their access to and control of agricultural land.

The source of small farmers' claims to the tenure of the land that they cultivate is largely through traditional mechanisms, including inheritance, or through allocation by village leaders. However, in these traditional tenure systems, women's land rights are not direct and do not include the defining attribute of secure ownership. Historically, women have to access land through their family relationship to a male relative. They can only obtain land rights as wives, or as daughters or sisters of males within their families. The fact that they do not have direct control to land means that women often take directions regarding farm management from their husbands, fathers, uncles or brothers.

In addition to being discriminatory to women, the traditional mechanisms of land acquisition and use have not kept abreast of the social changes in the family structure. Even as the number of female-headed households (FHHs) in Tanzania is increasing, customary practices, based on patrilineal rules of inheritance, discriminates against FHHs by not permitting them the basic agricultural resource (land) from which they can make a living. Single unmarried women, divorced women, and widows do not have direct access to agricultural land and cannot exercise effective control over it.

Whereas divorce was once uncommon in most of Africa, it is a real possibility today. When marriage fails, once women leave their husband's homesteads, their rights to land use as lineage wives are extinguished. Upon divorce, women lose their rights not only to use land, but also personal possessions, food supplies and unharvested crops in the farmland (Brain, 1976). The only option the divorced women have is to return to their own clan-land, which is under the custody of the brother or a designated male trustee. However, their return may be a source of another conflict since divorced women have no clearly defined rights in their natal villages. In some cases the brothers or whoever is the trustee for the land, do not accept the returnees. Usually the returnees are regarded as people wanting to "reap where they have not sown", especially in situations where the returnee has been away (married) for a long time. Due to these difficulties some divorced women attempt to remain in their marital homes so as to maintain their use rights to land (Tibaijuka, 1995).

Widows face similar difficult situations. Historically, widows were entitled to the homes of their husbands and to become custodians of the share of inheritance of their sons, until the sons take over their property. Thereupon, widows become dependants of their sons. However, changes in the economy, with competition for scarce land resources resulting from population pressure have resulted in an abuse of many of the cultural practices that protected widows and their children. As such the use rights of widows have become more difficult. For instance, the widow may be given cultivation rights in her husband's land, but her brothers-in-law may seek to limit her ability to enter into long-term transactions. The conflicts may arise even when the widow has the right through title registration (Gondwe, 1990; Tenga, 1990; Fimbo, 1973). As for childless widows, they have little chance of living on the deceased husband's land, and particularly where no son has issued from the marriage (Migot-Adholla & John, 1994). In several cases involving registered land, magistrate courts have upheld objections by brothers-in-law to attempts by widows without sons to inherit formally their deceased husband's land (Migot-Adholla & John, 1994; Gondwe, 1990; Tenga, 1990; Korosso, 1994; Fimbo, 1973). This occurs in spite of the fact that the widow herself may have invested considerable effort in developing the land.

Indirect access and lack of control of agricultural land experienced by FHHs, which is compounded with lack of other productive resources, expose them to the worst form of poverty. For instance, in many cases FHHs are households that are labor deprived as compared to conjugal families. The house where the female is the head of household will lack a man's labor and sometimes children's labor too, especially because in patrilineal societies children belong to fathers. In a study that Due and Magayane (1990) conducted, it was evident that the female-headed families were unable to prepare as much land and plant as much acreage as conjugal families. In cases where a female head of household is allocated a piece of land to farm, she may find herself unable to recruit the labor she needs for tasks such as plowing and harvesting, due to resource endowment (Migot-Adholla, 1994; Staudt, 1978). In addition, she is unlikely to obtain credit because the land is not directly hers. Moreover, single women will most likely not receive extension services since these services are often provided by and directed toward men who are regarded as farmers. As such female heads of households are curtailed from fully participating in and benefiting from new agricultural innovations and their ability to produce sufficient food is affected. In some cases FHHs partially compensated for their weak resource endowment by allocating their labor to non-crop income generation. Some engaged in beer brewing and selling of small quantities of fruits and vegetables in the local markets. Less fortunate women are forced to prostitution due to desperation (Due & Magayane, 1990). Denying these women their rights to agricultural resources amounts to condemning these women and the children they support to landlessness and severe poverty.

The problem of women's marginalization and subordination is not only manifested in rights to land but it is also legitimized by the structural arrangements of the wider society. This is mirrored by the widely established norm of male bias and dominance in administrative, judicial and other public decision making levels. Generally, men tend to monopolize all-important customary institutions through which their existing advantages of property ownership and control are perpetuated. Despite the switch of Tanzanian policies to a socialist movement, control over communal land remained predominantly with men. Clan land and also land under village administration is effectively under the managerial control of selected men in both traditional and contemporary institutions. While mostly men are represented in every institution of the village and also at district, regional and national levels, very few women have leadership roles. This lack of women representatives at institutional levels implies that men are decision makers even for those issues related to women problems (Freyhold, 1979). Not only that, the egalitarian gender relations as related to land acquisition and use that could have stemmed from the socialist change went unrealized.

Struggles against marginalized land rights

Today, there is an increasing awareness of female vulnerability in landholding systems (Mackenzie, 1990; Obbo, 1986) and women individually are actively looking for ways to struggle against their marginalization in land rights. Obbo (1986) in her study of rural Baganda women, found that married women being aware of the tenuous nature of their landholding rights, saved money for buying a piece of land as a security in the event of separation or divorce. Although purchase of land by women may be viewed as a positive response, it cannot be taken as a measure to address women's marginalized land rights because the purchase of land is an option open more to the small elite with access to a regular salary or other income from non-farm sources (Bruce, 1993; Mackenzie, 1990). Furthermore, men in some communities may not take purchase of land kindly.

For instance, Mackenzie (1990) reports that in many cases women had to purchase land secretively in order to protect their marriage. In some cases husbands intervened and actually stopped their wives from buying land. Mackenzie has this to say: "wife's purchase of land, while viewed as an explicit and immediate threat to the balance of power within the household, is also a threat to male-defined territory at the wider scale" (1990: 105).

In addition to secretive land purchase, women sometimes manipulate the customary practice in order to have access and control over land. Mackenzie (1989; 1990) reports cases in Kenya where women, especially the poorer widows, become "female husbands" in order to effect greater control over the land. What happens is that the widow marries a girl after the death of her husband and she becomes the controller of her husband's land. The girl's responsibility is to bear children with whomever she wishes. In the case of a "female husband's death" the "wife" is allowed to keep land and other property for herself and her sons, as such inheritance for her sons was assured. What do these events tell us? Much as these events were taken individually, they are important indicators of women's indirect struggle against their subordination.

In addition to women's indirect struggles the literature indicates that there have been various explicit measures undertaken to address women's marginalized situation. Changes in the international context included the declaration of 1975-85 as the United Nations (UN) Decade for women and the UN system committing itself to furthering the Women's Decade in several ways. A voluntary fund was established in 1976 to finance Decade projects. Later renamed UNIFEM, the fund provides direct financial and technical assistance to women's organizations through national governments. A commitment was also made to set up an International research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). The UN branch for the advancement of women was charged with promoting the UN Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and other international legal instruments (Young, 1993). It was in this way that the growing strength of the women's movement in all parts of the world led to women within the United Nations system and within national aid agencies beginning to make specific demands for women's voices to be heard in development decision making (Young, 1993).

The UN Development Decade also performed a useful role in sensitizing government bureaucracies to women's needs. And as the aftermath of the UN Decade for women, various women's bureaus were set in motion in 1980s to challenge women's marginalization. In some countries, ministries and or government departments were given a mandate to monitor and coordinate with women's issues at the national level. In Tanzania, the recognition of gender disadvantage has been reflected in a number of ways but the major one was the establishment of the Ministry of Community Development, Women and Children Affairs in Tanzania. The ministry's role is geared to monitor and coordinate women's concerns in the development process and to address basic community problems, especially those affecting women and children. Special programs to meet women's immediate needs, for example income generating and literacy schemes, and provision of other basic goods and services, were initiated by the ministry. However, the interventions programs did not address the marginality and powerlessness of women, mainly because the programs delivered to women were based on the incorrect assumption that acquisition of income would solve women's problems. Not only that, the skills, although necessary, were not enough to change the structures and institutions that perpetuated oppressive conditions to women. In other words ministries and government departments in Tanzania could not be taken as evidence of a substantive commitment to the eradication of structural inequalities between men and women.

Establishment of women's organizations was used as alternative strategy to bring women together and voice out their concerns. For instance, in Tanzania there is a national women's organization, named *Umoja wa Wanawake*[1] (UWT), through which the Government implements its policies directed to women. UWT is an affiliate of the ruling party and has branches in rural areas all over the country. Much as UWT is supposed to be a 'women's organization', it has no authority to make any decisions pertaining to women's needs; instead the government controls the overall operation of the organization. The ruling party authorities prepare UWT's policies and objectives, and also decide who is to lead the organization (Tenga & Peter, 1996). Much as UWT has a potential of serving the interests of women at the grassroots level, it is not independent in terms of decision-making.

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[1] Women's Union

The international women's movement also provided the impetus for a move to establish more autonomous organizations to provide a space for challenging conventional stereotypes about gender needs. Therefore, various agencies, particularly non-governmental organizations, engaged in a variety of strategies, for instance, lobbying around women's rights and campaigning for legal reform to address women's disempowerment. Grassroots non-governmental organizations had a greater advantage in promoting innovative strategies (Kabeer, 1994) due to their mode of operation, particularly their direct interactions with people at grassroots level. Most of such autonomous women's organizations have been resourceful in terms of providing a space within which awareness and empowerment could develop (Kabeer, 1994). However, in some cases such women's organizations are strongly opposed by the state.

It reminds me of a scenario where one organization in Tanzania was banned. After realizing that the national women's organization in Tanzania was not in any way an independent organization of women, several women wanted to create a strong and independent organization to safeguard women's rights. This led to the establishment of the Women's Council of Tanzania (Baraza la wanawake Tanzania[2], Bawata). Bawata had a wide mandate to investigate and monitor all matters relating to ownership of land, inheritance, and social services. However, the Tanzanian government did not welcome the establishment of a strong and independent organization, given that the ruling party, for so many years, had all women in Tanzania under its control. Consequently, Bawata encountered a number of threats from the ruling party, CCM, and several warnings from the President of the United Republic. The message put forward was that what Bawata was doing was an assault against the party, one that challenges allegiance to the national polity and ultimately Bawata was banned.

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[2] Translated as 'Women's Council of Tanzania' in English.

Lack of sustainability of women's organizations was another problem facing women's efforts to address their subordination. For instance, writing on Rwanda, Ahikire (1994) opines that in most cases the decision of formulating a women's organization is not from local women's initiatives, rather the decision is imposed on them. In addition to that, Kiwanuka (1994) in her study conducted in Uganda, found that development packages introduced by authorities of contemporary women organizations were not relevant to their situation and as a result women decided to silently pull out from membership. Kiwanuka (1994) and Ahikire (1994) further suggest that such women's organizations lacked sensitivity to the needs of rural poor women (Kiwanuka, 1994; Ahikire, 1994).

The effort to provide space for women's own voices to be heard through organizational practices did not end there. In 1990s women activists in Tanzania, specifically women lawyers came together to try to address the problem of women's inheritance rights. Women lawyers in Tanzania reacted to the National Land Policy (NLP) proposals of 1995 and suggested amendments to the NLP draft (Manji, 1998).

While women lawyers' input was significant, it was insufficient to address the complex issues of gender and land rights in Tanzania. Moreover, evidence has shown that people in rural communities of most African countries rarely practice the law, be it land law or law of marriage. For instance, Cross & Friedman (1997) and also Thorp (1997) have criticized the idea that law reform is a panacea for the ills of women. They view reform is a simplistic idea that ignores critical social dynamics that strongly influences how agricultural land as a resource is acquired, utilized, and contested. Cross & Friedman had this to share:

> Real tenure in rural African areas rarely works the way it is legally supposed to. It seems that what is formally written into law rarely reached down to the people.... Moreover, people have actually used informal tenure for a number of years. The community can control communal tenure almost entirely, with disputes over land arbitrated at the local level, and with little central intervention. (1997:20)

Similarly Thorp (1997) argues that laws from the books are not the same as laws at the communities. She also emphasized that negative sanctions in rural communities are still valid and socially acceptable means of dealing with any disputes, be it marital or land disputes.

The measures mentioned above to address women's land issue indicate that intervention programs by the government and other related organizations tend to simplify the complexity of women's land problem and there is a tendency to assume that legal solutions will adequately address women's land problem. Strategies mentioned above left women still deprived them of their traditional sources of power and status. More important is the fact that women's experiences and their local knowledge are still in danger of remaining shrouded because local women are not given the opportunity to open up and share their experiences (Meer, 1997; Kabeer

1999).

The issue of people having more equitable distribution of land has been debated at length by a number of theorists, in particular Human Development theorists and other advocates of social justice (UNDP, 1995). Increasingly, stronger and more persuasive calls have been made for the integral participation of people as subjects in the process of creating and directing their own development (FAO, 1984). In similar vein, Toh (1987) speaks of alternative development, which requires the rural sector to be in the lead and the rural poor people to be at the center of the development process. He insists that participation of the local people allows the accumulated knowledge of the poor local people to be tapped rather than ignored. The assumption underlying these initiatives is that the inclusion of women in the decision making process will contribute positively to the social and economic development of rural societies particularly because women are believed to be essential agents of social, political and economic change (Haq, 1995; UNPD, 1995).

Related to the issue of including women in decision making process is the concern by some analysts that community input is essential to the construction of an effective reform program (Manji, 1998; Meer, 1997; Crossman & Friedman, 1997; Thorp, 1997). They stress that disadvantaged members of the community need to be taken into account, their voices must be heard and they should become full participants in their societies. This position presented a major challenge to researchers and academics, a challenge to find ways of supporting power to powerless people.

Thus, researchers and academics became actively involved in seeking solutions to women's marginalized conditions, including their rights to land. Since the UN Decade of Women there have been competing schools of thought concerned with women's invisibility and a commitment to improve the conditions of women's lives. More important has been a shift among gender researchers from studying women as recipients and passive clients to making concerted attempt of viewing women as actors in development process (Martinussen, 1997).

Using a distinction suggested by Rathgeber (1990) the overall trend in research on women and gender could be described with reference to three main positions, which are Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD). The WID approach focuses on how women could better be integrated into ongoing development initiatives through equal participation in education, employment, and other spheres of society. Since WID approaches are non-confrontational, there is no questioning of the sources and nature of women's subordination and oppression (Visvanathan, 1997; Young, 1993; Rathegeber, 1990).

The WAD perspective on the other hand focuses on the relationship between women and development processes rather than on strategies for the integration of women into development. The WAD perspective recognizes that Third World men who do not have elite status also have been adversely affected by the structure of the inequalities within the international system. Its perspective implicitly assumes that women's position will improve if and when international structures become more equitable. It gives little analytical attention to the social relations of gender within classes (Visvanathan, 1997; Rathegeber, 1990). There has been a feeling that sustainable change in women's material conditions will never come about without tackling the underlying structures, which produce the imbalance between the genders (Kabeer, 1994; Young, 1993; Meer, 1997; Manji, 1998). These concerns led to the development of GAD approach.

The GAD model uses gender relations rather than 'women' as a category of analysis. It follows that, proponents of the Gender and Development (GAD) approach emphasize holistic analyses of the social and cultural systems for a genuine understanding of the problems related to gender relations. They believe that gender identities are created and reproduced within the social and cultural system (Martinussen, 1997; Young, 1993; Rathgeber, 1990). As such, the GAD approach gives weight to political activism by women, advocating strategies such as community organizing, transformative action, public education and coalition-building (WILDAF, 1990; Mikell, 1997; Rathbeger, 1990). A key focus of research from a gender-and-development perspective is on the strengthening of women's legal rights, including the reform of inheritance and land laws.

For instance a number of case studies in Mikell's (1997) *'African Feminism'* presents African women's understanding of gender problems in African societies. The authors posit that they have used the gender-focused approach in their struggles to change patriarchal social relations. African women in those case studies asserted that problems of gender and property rights derive not just from patriarchal positions taken by men, but partially from the lack of ability of various male dominated governments to address gender issues (Donaldson, 1997; Mikell, 1997). In Mikell's words,

> *The responsibility of African women must be to participate in local, public, and political processes that bring women and other groups of ordinary citizens to dialogue with the government.... dialogue that challenges the state to make it more assertive and positive in its actions. (1997:32)*

While it is not clear from the statement whether it is 'women' or 'the government' that are supposed to be more assertive I wished and hoped for rural women to be assertive and positive in their actions.

The demand for empowerment

Proponents of people-centered development advocate the kind of development that empowers people, and one that gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities, and providing for their participation in decisions that affect them (Speth, 1995; Haq, 1992; Chambers, 1983; 1994). Robert Chambers' (1994) main concern is that the scope of human sufferings is underscored. According to Chambers, the fact that professionals and poor people experience and construct different realities, the rural problems are not correctly defined. However, he argues, if the realities of poor people are to count more, professionals must try to know it better. Chambers believes that the challenge for professionals is to embrace the new paradigm, as he emphasizes: "…to see things the other way round, to soften and flatten hierarchy, to adopt downward accountability, to change behavior, attitudes and beliefs, and to identify and implement a new agenda" (1994:14). While Chambers calls for the new professionalism which stresses reversals, local diversity and empowerment, Julius Nyerere (1968) expressed women's indispensable role in development when he said "National development is dependent upon women of Africa and cannot take place without them. A person does not walk very far or very fast on one leg. How can we expect half the people to be able to develop the nation?" (1968:3). James Gustave

Speth (1995:iii) as well writes "If development is meant to widen opportunities for all people, then continuing exclusion of women from many opportunities of life totally warps the process of development". In addition, the language of empowerment had gained prominence in early 1990's. Various international development agencies called for the empowerment of the poor and of women in their policy declarations. The World Bank, UNDP, Feminist groups and most aid agencies also wished to empower women. As the Human Development Report states:

> Empowering people, particularly women, is a sure way to link growth and human development…Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to contribute to overall development. (1995:123).

While the call to invest on women's capabilities is very crucial in the development programs, the term 'empowerment' is a problematic construct. It is problematic because it has various meanings to different people and there is no consensus on the meaning of the term (Visvanathan, 1997; Haq, 1995; Kabeer, 1994). Haq (1995) argues that empowering women by improving their capacities and providing equal access to market opportunities is the only reliable strategy for liberating societies from continuing burden of poverty. Visvanathan (1997) on the other hand looks at 'empowerment' in a broader sense. For her empowerment implies greater equality for women in the performance of challenging patriarchal relations and other oppressive practices. Lather (1991), using Gramsci's notion of counter-hegemony, demystifies the notion of empowerment as something done "to" or "for" someone. Lather argues that empowerment is a process one undertakes for oneself.

Kabeer (1994) adds an aspect of how such patriarchal relations can be challenged. She argues that empowerment entails conscientization or breaking the silence that women suffer from. Likewise, Lather emphasizes that empowerment means analyzing ideas about the causes of powerlessness, recognizing systemic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change the conditions of people's lives. Seemingly, Lather and Kabeer advocate the significance of collective strength. They believe that the heart of the idea of empowerment involves people coming into a sense of their own power, a new relationship with their own contexts. This is a phenomenon that Kabeer (1994) refers to as 'power within'; power that needs to be derived from self-definition and assertiveness. In other words, Lather and Kabeer are emphasizing the importance of developing a better understanding of whatever was taken-for-granted and they also stress collective strength. Hence, what ought to be done is to find a strategy to revive and or create women's knowledge in collective effort (Lather, 1990; Kabeer, 199) in order for them to develop a deepening understanding of the land problem facing them.

Chapter Three: Is knowledge a means to an end?

In September 1995 I began to pursue a Master's program in Rural Sociology. With my background in natural science (a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture) it was not easy to understand the readings assigned during my course work. I felt a bit relieved when I read Robert Chamber's 'Rural *Development: Putting the Last First' (1983)* as I could easily relate to this reading. Actually I felt the book was speaking about me and the message contained in this book was the source of my inspiration to know more about 'knowledge and knowing'. The main theme of Chambers' book is about 'making reversals for rural development'. Chambers demonstrated weaknesses in how development practitioners and other professionals perform their duties. He views the people concerned with rural development, who are themselves neither rural nor poor, as 'outsiders'. In addition to being 'outsiders', these people are in some ways ignorant. In Chambers words: "Not only do urban-based professionals and officials often not know the rural reality; worse, they do not know that they do not know" (1983:6). What Chambers is saying here is that the urban-based professionals have incorrect perceptions of rural poverty.

Related to Chamber's notion of 'outsiders' ignorance' is Nyerere's low opinion of agricultural experts' performance in Tanzania. He frequently rebuked agricultural experts in Tanzania suggesting that farmers could just as well produce without technical advice from these experts.[3] Seemingly, both Chambers and Nyerere's statements conflicted with what I had in mind. I was keenly aware that we agricultural experts had the mastery in terms of knowledge of agricultural development. We were trained and specialized in agriculture and our task was to disseminate technical knowledge to farmers to facilitate agricultural development. I then felt mixed up, really confused!

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[3] I refer here to my own experience as an agricultural officer in Tanzania for the past 20 years. I remember Nyerere often referring to his dissatisfaction with our performance.

Although Nyerere's statement seemed to belittle agricultural experts, on the contrary he praised farmers for being knowledgeable people. In one of his writings he commented positively on informal acquisition of farming skills in rural Tanzanian societies. He said:

> Over the years people have learned somewhat relatively sure and safe ways to farm. They learned farming from forefathers, the trusted teachers. Farmers become skilled through years of trial and error… They have enormous amounts of local knowledge… (1968:49)

The statement suggests that while farmers do not have technical knowledge, they are more knowledgeable about their situation than anyone else. Nyerere had faith in farmer's knowledge and his statement, in some ways augments Chambers notion of outsiders 'not knowing what they do not know'. In addition, the two authors' statements suggest that much as experts possess knowledge, they might be oblivious of the fact that local people too have knowledge. The claim that 'local people have enormous amounts of knowledge' stirred up my motive to know what 'others' know.

Apprenticeship learning

Reflecting on Nyerere's statement, particularly on the aspect of 'farmers being skilled', the first question that came to mind is "how did these farmers acquire their farming skills?" Obviously, they did not acquire competence in farming through reading and writing. Learning was basically through 'doing'. In other words farmers acquired their know-how through 'apprenticeship', whereby the farming skill was passed on from the master to apprentice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Polanyi, 1962).

Polanyi conceives a skill as an art. He says an art, which cannot be specified in details cannot be transmitted by prescription. In his words, "all arts are learned by intelligently imitating the way they are practiced by other persons in whom the learner places his confidence" (1962:53). Polanyi seems to present a different type of learning here, that of imitation, whereby diffusion of knowledge is restricted to personal contacts. Thus, in the aforementioned example, the 'forefathers' were trusted teachers or masterful performers, who transmitted the 'farming skills' to apprentice farmers. Lave and Wenger (1991) and Polanyi (1962) believe that the nature of interaction and the level of confidence between the master and the apprentice is important in apprenticeship learning. As Polanyi says :

> You follow your master because you trust his manner of doing things even when you cannot analyze and account in detail for its effectiveness. By watching the master and emulating his efforts in the presence of his example, the apprentice unconsciously picks up the rules of the art, including those, which are not explicitly known to the master himself (1962:54).

Thus, personal contact between a master and apprentice, Polanyi says, involves the real communication of knowledge at the inarticulate level. In this learning situation the individual learner is not gaining a discrete body of abstract knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991), instead the learner acquires the skill to perform by actually engaging in the process of working. For Lave & Wenger (1991) it is the social engagement and the interactive role of the learning process that is more important for the skills to be acquired.

Notwithstanding, some analysts looked at the phenomenon of apprenticeship learning within a much wider scope particularly when the master-apprenticeship relationship is connected to a process of transmitting social lore from one generation to another (Stenmark, 2002; Polanyi, 1962). Social lore here refers to traditional knowledge, know-how or traditional teachings. Stenmark specifically, talks about transmission of cultural inheritance, as he says, "the cultural inheritance we carry is transferred from generation to generation through a social interplay.... we learn not only from the individuals we interact with directly, but also from generations before them" (2002:5). Here, Stenmark points to how traditional knowledge and other teachings of a particular society are passed on through generations.

The working of the transmission of cultural knowledge is reflected by the existence of a strong thread of cultural continuity that connects women's lives today and the experiences of earlier generations. As literature indicates, indigenous African women have been and still are very resourceful in terms of dissemination of traditional beliefs and practices (Toungara; 1997; Manuh, 1997; Nzomo, 1997; Donaldson, 1997; Shehu, 1997; Kiwanuka, 1994). For instance, Kiwanuka (1994) has shown that in some Ugandan rural communities it is only women that can make decisions about cultural education at functions such as funerals, twin's rituals and initiation ceremonies. Atieno and Hayanga (1994) too in their case study in Siaya district in Kenya found that women are regarded as custodians of tradition and culture, and they have the responsibility of passing it from one generation to another.

Harre et al (1978) share ideas on apprenticeship learning when they talk about 'apprenticeship to sociality'. This refers to the situation where an individual acquires (becomes equipped with) competence in and knowledge of the social world. While Harre et al (1978) believe that the immediate family and the experiences of family living play an important role for people to acquire their sense of, and competence in, the social world, Wenger (1998) had different views on the same phenomenon, clearly pointing out that family living is not the only locale in which competence in and knowledge of the social world is acquired. To Wenger (1998:10) learning is an integral part of our everyday lives and that knowing involves primarily active participation in social communities. It is this participation that Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize in their concept of 'situated learning' they locate learning in the processes of co-participation. By co-participating, members of the community or society make a tacit choice to relate to each other in accordance with certain norms and conventions of that community or society (Heron, 1981). In other words, there is tacit commitment to prevailing social norms by members of the community. Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do (Tsoukas, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Harre, 1978)

Non-explicit process of knowing (tacit knowing)

The notion of 'apprenticeship in sociality' and learning through participating in communities has been supported by Tsoukas (1996). He argues that, it is under the guidance of people who are more experienced than us that we learn to engage in various practical activities. In his words "the unarticulated background in which we dwell on is known by us through our having been socialized into it by others" (1996:15). That is, it is through our socialization that we internalize a set of background assumptions, which is constitutive of our practice. In simple language it is the same as saying there are things that are known tacitly and they reside in the social practices, in which we happen to participate.

The unarticulated background that Tsoukas talks about is the 'knowledge that could be implicitly manifested' or what others call 'Tacit knowledge'. Tacit Knowledge is described as the knowledge that we have without knowing we know it. This type of knowledge is said to be deeply rooted in individuals' actions and experience as well as in the ideals, values, or emotions that one embraces. As such, it is silent and it emerges only when a person is doing something that requires such knowledge or when they are reminded of it. The work of Michael Polanyi could be seen as an attempt to illuminate the understanding of this type of knowledge. Polanyi (1962, 1966, 1975) takes the fact that 'we know more than we can tell', as a starting point of his philosophy. Polanyi speaks of tacit knowledge as a backdrop against which all actions are understood; however, whatever governs tacit knowledge is not conscious.

One of the most distinguishing features of Polanyi's work is his determination to unearth the non-explicit processes underlying explicit processes of knowing. According to Polanyi, tacit knowing requires three elements: subsidiary particulars, a focal target, and a person who links the two. Polanyi says when we are sharply aware of anything, we are aware of it as a whole, that is we know it focally. But we know it always in terms of coherence of certain particulars, which are known subsidiarily. Polanyi uses the word 'tools' (or clues) in many of his examples to describe subsidiary and focal awareness. His most frequently used example was as follows:

> When we use a hammer to drive in a nail, we attend to both nail and hammer but in a different way. We watch the effect of our strokes on the nail and try to wield the hammer so as to hit the nail most effectively. When we bring down the hammer we do not feel that its handle has struck our palm and the fingers that hold the hammer…. We are certainly alert to the feeling in our palm and the fingers that hold the hammer. The feelings guide us in handling the hammer

> effectively, and the degree of attention that we give to the nail is given to the same extent but in a different way to these feelings" (Polanyi, 1962: 55).

From this example Polanyi describes the 'driving of the nail' as the object of our attention (focal awareness) and the feeling in the palm of a hand as a subsidiary awareness or the instrument of 'driving the nail'. Always subsidiary awareness is instrumental in nature, it is used as a tool that supports focal awareness in the process of knowing.

A tool is anything that can be used as an instrument to achieve a useful purpose and for Polanyi, there is no difference between touchable material things like probes, sticks, or hammers and intangible constructions such as linguistic or cultural knowledge (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975; Polanyi, 1962). However, in order to use a tool properly, one needs to assimilate it and dwell in it. To dwell in a tool, as Polanyi uses the term, implies acceptance of the 'tool' or identifying oneself with a particular tool. The individual accepting the 'tool' becomes unconsciously committed to it. A good example is when the scientist accepts a theory or set of pre-suppositions and uses them as an interpretative framework, she/he may be said to dwell in these pre-suppositions (Polanyi, 1962; 1966).

Polanyi further describes the process of integrating the clues or the tools in the event of understanding a situation. He recognized that each person, novice or expert, has great stores of tacit knowledge with which to build new understandings. According to Polanyi, when a person is exposed to a situation, any new information is blended (or integrated) into previously acquired information, however, same knowledge could be manifested later either through speech or actions. This blending is possible because knowledge has a 'latent' character - that is when acquired, knowledge is always retained (Polanyi, 1962). Polanyi regards combination of acts or knowledge previously learned, as latent learning. This process of blending new information with previously learned and retained knowledge is inarticulate. As such tacit knowledge includes a multitude of inexpressible associations, which give rise to new meanings, new ideas, and new applications of the old. Latent learning may be viewed as presented in the following diagram:

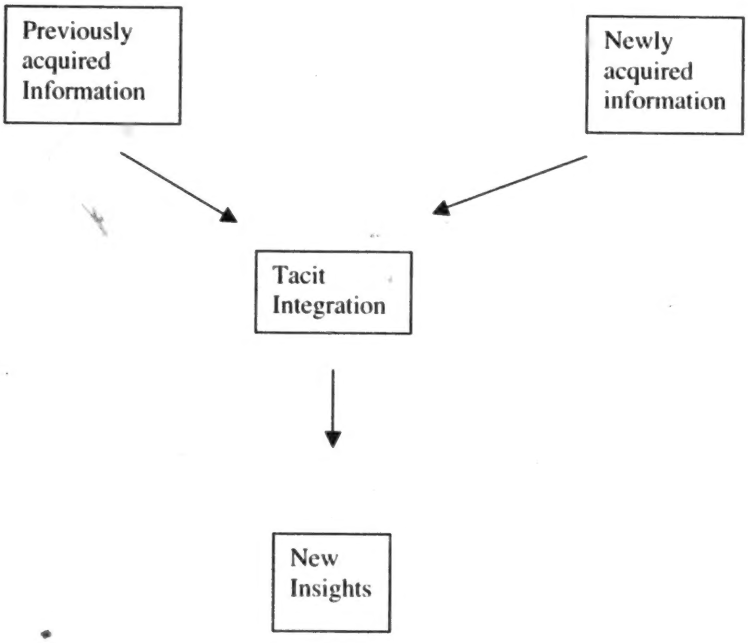
Previously acquired Information
Newly acquired information
Tacit Integration
New Insights

Figure 1: Latent learning

In addition to the process of tacit knowing, Polanyi showed that people's implicit knowledge could be revealed by performance of intelligent actions. He says, there are some experiences that people grasp, and can display in their actions, but that they cannot speak of. He gave an example of skills or of connoisseurship, saying that, skills cannot be analyzed in explicit detail because they are beyond precise articulation. In his words, "skills retain an element of opacity and unspecificity and hence cannot be fully accounted for in terms of their particulars…." (1962:70). In a similar vein, Schon (1987) talks of skillful performances that people exhibit what they know without being able to describe how to do or even to entertain in conscious thought the knowledge that their actions reveal. He gives an example of the ability of skilled physicians to recognize a particular disease, the moment they come into contact with the person afflicted with it.

Although, according to Schon (1987) the physician may later discover reasons for his diagnosis after an examination, often he is unable to say what clues triggered his immediate judgment in the first place. Schon's example suggests that people exhibit what they know without being able to describe the knowledge that their actions reveal. Schon and Polanyi argue that the execution of a skillful performance is an attempt to make explicit that form of intelligence which is inarticulate.

Social actors' knowledgeability

The non-explicit process by which we "know and do" things, presented by Polanyi, accounts for the possession by humanity of an immense mental domain of knowledge, particularly of the many different arts which people know how to use, enjoy or live by, without knowing their contents (Moss, 1995; Schon, 1987; Polanyi & Prosch, 1975). It seems we engage in tacit knowing through virtually anything we do. Tsoukas (2001) too, has a view that to a large extent, our daily life consists of a huge number of small details which we do reflexively or automatically without consciously attending to them. Not only that, people also possesses the knowledge of manners, rules and laws that they tacitly comply with. If that is true, I am compelled to believe that women in rural villages engage in a process of knowing in whatever they do and as such, they have enormous knowledge of the things they know tacitly.

Similarly, Giddens (1979; 1987) in his theory of structuration talks about knowledge that human actors possess. He believes that by virtue of active participation every member of society gets to know a great deal about the workings of that society. He emphasizes that all competent members of society are vastly skilled in the practical accomplishment of social activities. In his words: "The knowledge of social conventions, of oneself and of other human beings, presumed in being able to go on in the diversity of contexts of social life is detailed and dazzling" (1987:26). The core of actor's 'knowledgeability' is their awareness of social rules, which is expressed in practical consciousness. However, he says, most of the rules implicated in the production of social practices are not in explicitly codified form (1987:57). Instead social actors grasp those rules tacitly. The figure below illustrates social actors' knowledgeability:

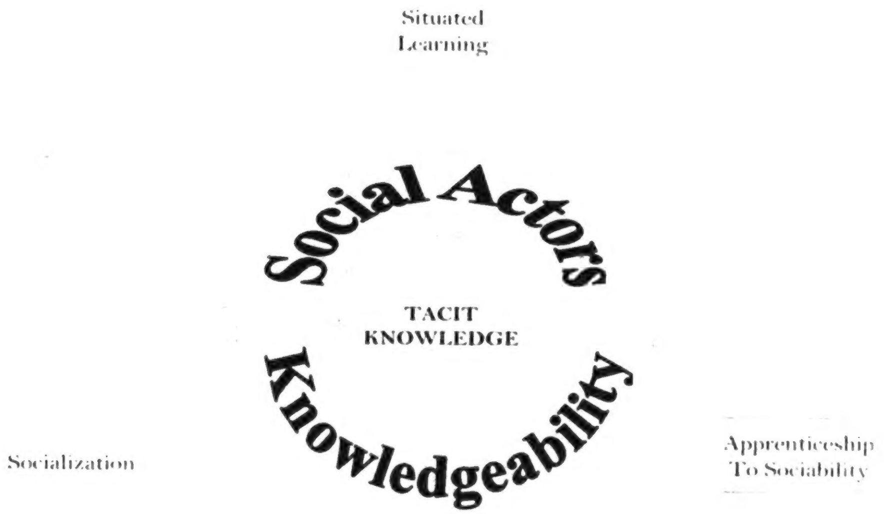
Situated Learning
Social Actors
TACIT KNOWLEDGE
Knowledgeability
Socialization
Apprenticeship To Sociability

Figure 2: Social actors' knowledgeability

All of what has been said above by different theorists implies that, indeed we know more than we can tell. Human beings, as social actors are, in Giddens' language, highly 'learned' in respect of knowledge, which they possess, apply, and comply with. Without being aware of or able to express the knowledge that is tacitly embedded in people's tradition and culture, they use it as an unarticulated background against whatever they currently attend. With this in mind, I kept asking myself if women in rural Tanzania are highly learned, in respect to the knowledge they possess, how useful would this knowledge be in terms of solving their problems?

Tacit sharing of knowing

Giddens (1979:91) further talks of discursive capabilities whereby social actors can successfully communicate their knowledge to others. Polanyi (1962) believes that the flow of communications and the maintenance of an articulate consensus between people is made possible through personal tacit interactions. In other words people are able to communicate and to reach consensus through tacit personal interactions.

Polanyi's notion of tacit personal interaction is related to Heron's (1981) idea of 'mutual understanding'. According to Heron, when two persons communicate there is unspoken agreement, which is mediated through non-verbal expressive signs they make to each other. He calls this kind of unspoken agreement 'mutuality of understanding'.

Heron suggests that there is a tacit dimension in this mutuality that enables people to share and understand each other. He further sees the interconnectedness through presence to each other and through non-verbal expressive signs as a form of knowing. However, "such is tacit and unfocused" (Heron, 1981:25).

The same tacit personal interactions gratify a desire for companionship and it builds conviviality. According to Polanyi (1962) conviviality is articulated and made effective by deliberate sharing of experience, and most commonly by conversation. This kind of interaction enables people to reach out to each other and share each other's lives.

Conviviality also is a process of cultivating good fellowship. Polanyi sees the process of fostering good fellowship as a direct contribution to the fulfillment of man's purpose and duty as a social being. More important is the fact this process forms a transition, from sharing of experience to a participation in joint activities. Underlying all these acts of articulate communication, according to Polanyi is "tacit sharing of knowing" (1962:203).

In a similar vein Park (1993) presents views on the significance of 'interaction' when he talks about interactive knowledge. Park argues that, in living with other human beings people come to know others in an interactive sense. It is by sharing visions, anguish, conflicts and struggles that people come to know one another as feeling beings. In his words, "it is through talking to one another and doing things together that we get connected, and this connectedness gives us a kind of knowledge that is different from control-minded knowledge" (1993:6). Here Park talks of the significance of mutual support and human community, which is made possible through conversations where people talk with personal feelings and listen to each other with interest and supportiveness.

In addition to the ability to communicate knowledge through tacit personal interaction, Freire believes that human beings are naturally inquisitive (Freire, 1970; 1973; 1985). By nature, Freire wrote, people are curious about their environment and conditions. They can learn what they know and do not know, and use their knowledge to learn more as well as to solve problems they observe. Angela Miles (1996) analysis on Horton and Freire's dialogue (1990) on effective adult education for social change is helpful to understand this notion of people 'learning what they know and do not know'. Based on Horton & Frire's ideas, Miles argue that, "little pockets of hope and adventurism can provide the context for education for social change as long as the collective aspiration of freedom of creativity is there" (1996:277). I understood the collective aspiration as a 'will' and if people have a will to learn and anticipate benefiting from what they learn, they would definitely be open to learn what they do not know for their own benefit.

To promote peoples' capacity to resist and transform, Freire proposes a dialogue approach, in which members participate as equals and co-learners to create social knowledge. The goal of group dialogue is critical thinking by posing problems in such a way as to have participants uncover root causes of their place in society – the socioeconomic, political, cultural, and historical context of personal lives, what Freire calls 'conscientization.

The process of 'conscientization', is at the heart of the Freirian approach and he defines 'conscientization' as the process by which adults "achieve a deepening awareness of both socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and their capacity to transform that reality through action upon it" (1970:27). However, critical consciousness is raised not by analyzing the problematic situation alone, but by engaging in actions in order to transform the situation. As Park (1993) says,

> Critical examination means not only that people come to grasp the causes of their miseries. But by reflecting on these causes as being historically rooted in human actions, they also come to realize that things do not have to remain the way they are and that they can engage in actions to transform the reality (1993:6).

What Park is advocating here is similar to what other scholars refer to as education for emancipation and transformation (Mayo, 1996; Cawagas, 1996; Hall, 1992; Kabeer, 1990; Maguire, 1987; Labelle, 1987), which catalyzes people to undertake action on the basis of their consciousness and self-realized responsibility (Lather, 1986; 1990). For instance, Cawagas and Toh (1989) have developed a pedagogical model that helps to empower marginalized members of the society through provision of peace education. They have shown substantive evidence on how emancipatory education works against a state of marginalization. To them the state of empowerment is achieved through critical consciousness and learning to ask in-depth questions that seek the root causes of the problem.

It came to mind that we professionals have a challenge to figure out ways to help women to take up their own lives. I had a number of questions in my mind as follows: Do the village women really know more than they can tell (Polanyi, 1962; 1967; 1969)? In what circumstances could the process of conscientization (Freire, 1970; 1973; 1985; 1997) take place? Is there any possibility for 'the paradigm' to be reversed (Chambers, 1983; 1995)? Since rural women's experiences and the abundance of their knowledge are in danger of being shrouded I thought of ways to look for opportunities for them to open up and share their experiences as indicated in the following chapter in which I discuss the methodology used for this research.

Chapter Four: Research context and methodology

Positivism assumes that the social world exists as a system of distinct, observable variables, independent of the knower (Smith, 1997; Maguire, 1987). Positivism holds that positive knowledge is based upon facts as elaborated and verified by the methods of empirical sciences. Although positivism is the orthodox approach to doing empirical research in the human sciences the trend today is directed towards having alternative ways of doing research. As far back as 1977 a number researchers concerned with the development of alternative research approaches, met in London to discuss and explore these possibilities (Rowan & Reason, 1981). A similar state of affairs took place during the "Alternative Paradigms Conference" held in San Francisco, March 1989 (Guba, 1990). The main argument against traditional scientific orthodoxy is that it alienates human subjects from the inquiry process and from the knowledge that is its outcome (Rowan & Reason, 1981).

Rowan and Reason (1981) opine that a worldview, which is more holistic, egalitarian and essentially participative is currently emerging. This worldview sees people as active subjects of the world and according to Rowan and Reason, peoples needs are taken as the point of departure for knowledge production. In a similar vein Heron (1992) argues that human beings co-create their reality through participation; that is through their experience, their imagination and intuition, their thinking and their action.

Lather (1991; 1986) too shared views on the question of having alternative ways of doing research and she talks of a post-positivist era, which is marked by inquiry approaches that recognize knowledge is "socially constituted and historically embedded. Lather's text is written from the perspective of one who believes that, just as there is no neutral education (Freire, 1973), there is no neutral research (Reason and Rowan, 1981). She advocates for an emancipatory, critical social science that must be premised upon the development of research approaches which empower those involved to change as well as understand the world. What needs to be done, according to Lather (1991) is for the critics of traditional scientific orthodoxy to share efforts to formulate approaches to empirical research, which advance emancipatory theory building through the development of interactive and action-inspiring research designs. It is in this context that I have chosen Participatory action research (PAR), as the appropriate methodology for this study.

Why participatory action research?

Participatory action research (PAR) is a systematic inquiry, with the collaboration of those affected by the issue being studied, for the purposes of education and taking action. Advocates of participatory action research (Freire, 1997; 1993; Park, 1993; Hall, 1992, 1981; Rahman & Fals-Borda, 1991; Tandon, 1988) argue that participatory action research assists in organizing the activities of ordinary people, who have little power and small means, to come together and change the structural features of their social economic conditions in an effort to realize a fuller life and a more just society. Freire (1993) further posits that PAR provides the means for people to regain their ability to think for themselves as well as to remember their history and to revive their culture. Park (1993) treats the role of participatory research as to recover local people's practical skills and collective wisdom that live on but are submerged.

With this in mind, my research study was accomplished through working collaboratively with village women in rural Tanzania to identify possible solutions to the land access problem. The research was intended to assist female heads of households, as the people who are most sharply affected by inability to access and control agricultural land, to develop a comprehensive understanding of their position vis a vis land rights, and to develop and implement a plan of action which reflects that understanding.

My main research question was "To what extent can female heads of households develop an understanding of their structural position in regards to land that enables them to change that position?" Related questions are: How do they acquire a critical understanding of their subordination and marginalization as it relates to restructured rights to agricultural land? How do they acquire the knowledge to gain critical insights that will open up possibilities for changing their situation?

This study facilitated and observed women involved in a three-fold cyclical process involving collective learning through searching and analyzing information about their access and control of land, collective action taking, and collective reflection that returned the women to further searching and analyzing of more information about their situation. Research participants' ideas on how they encounter difficulties in accessing land, the causes of the problem and possible alternatives to the problem were central to conducting this research study. The changing nature of these ideas as they work together through time formed the core data for my analysis. Details of how this research was conducted will be described under a separate section, however, below is a brief description of the research site.

The research site

This research was conducted in one village in Kagera Region. Kagera region is located in the extreme northwestern corner of Tanzania. It lies between 1 and 2.45 degrees below the equator; longitudinally it lies between 30.25 and 32.40 degrees east of Greenwich (Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), 2001). The region has common borders with Uganda to the north, Rwanda and Burundi to the west, and Kigoma and Shinyanga regions of Tanzania to the south. To the east of the region lies Lake Victoria. Kagera region covers a total area of 40,838 square kilometers. Out of the total area, 28,953 square kilometers is land and 11,885 square kilometers is covered by water (MOA, 2001). The region is divided into six administrative districts, namely Bukoba urban, Bukoba rural[4], Biharamulo, Karagwe, Muleba, and Ngara. The Ba-Haya are the majority among the major ethnic groups of Bukoba district.

The main economic activity carried out by the people in Bukoba district is agricultural production. Farming in Bu-Haya society is an integrated enterprise. A typical household cultivates food crops, cash crops and also supports itself with income from extra-agricultural enterprises, such as fishing, house construction, furniture making, and tailoring, brewing and petty trading.

Agriculture engages about 90 percent of the population in the production of food and cash crops (MOA, 2001). This is possible because rainfall in Bukoba and the rest of Kagera region is adequate throughout the year. The dry season lasts from June to September with July as the only really dry month. The rest of the year is wet with two peaks, a major one between March and May and a minor one between

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[4] This research was conducted in Bukoba rural district.

November and December (MOA, 2001).

The main perennial crops grown include banana, which is the main staple and coffee as the major cash crop. Ebitoke is the common name for cooking bananas, which is the dominant group of sub-species cultivated in the kibanja. They form the staple food in the whole area and are normally harvested shortly before they ripen. They are peeled and cooked before they are eaten. Gonja is the name for the species used for roasting. They are mainly served as a delicacy for guests. Ebiise is the name given to the above-mentioned species when they are eaten ripe and fresh as a sweet. Perennial crops such as bananas are inter-planted seasonally with beans, maize and pumpkins.

The division of labor between men and women, in terms of farm activities is clear. Traditionally the wife prepares the land, ready for planting and informs the husband how many banana plants are needed. The digging of holes, the manuring of the soil, planting and maintenance of the banana plants is a man's responsibility. It is a man's job to weed the permanent crop areas and also to mulch the crop with grasses or banana stem cuttings and leaves. The husband also decides about the utilization of beer-bananas.

Women, on the other hand undertake the responsibilities of not only producing food crops but also deciding how much is necessary for food consumption at home and how much should be given away to fulfill social obligations (Smith, 2000).

In Bukoba, certain farm activities are performed communally, particularly in cultivating the annual food crops. For instance, in every village women have organized themselves into groups to form cooperative associations or the *chama*. Women who are members of the *chama* cooperate as field workers and provide social support as they perform various farm activities. The *chama* members spend their time in turn on each other's fields, doing the complete cultivation of one woman's field. They always plant beans together in v*ibanjas*, they plant groundnuts and bambara nuts in the *omusiri* plots together and they share the work of guarding the crops against vermin. The harvesting is done in the same manner but no joint sharing of the production takes place. This social cooperation also takes place when guests arrive or during major family events such as weddings and deaths. Most of these women groups are spontaneous social groups, not officially registered groups (Smith, 2000; Swantz, 1985; Rald & Rald, 1975).

The Ba-Haya divide their land use into different land-use types. I found it convenient to apply the Haya terms to the land-use types: *Kibanja; Ekishambu; Orweya* and *Omusiri*. *Kibanja* (plural *bibanja*) is the name given to a plot of land cultivated with the perennial crops banana and coffee. The range of the sizes of the individual *kibanja* plots varies from 0.2 ha to 5.0 ha (Rald & Rald, 1975). *Ekishambu* applies to a piece of land, which has been cultivated with perennial crops and has been left to be reclaimed by grass or weeds or to lie fallow. Thus *ekishambu* represents potential *kibanja* land, which can quite easily be put back into use. *Rweya* is the name given to open grass or bush land. This land consists of areas uncultivated because of shallow soil or steep slope gradients (Rald & Rald, 1975). Uncultivated grassland between the villages, which is not part of farm units, is also referred to as *Rweya*. *Omusiri* is the term used for a small plot of land cultivated with annual crops outside the *kibanja*. These plots provide the family with the necessary supplementary food.

Rald and Rald (1975) noted that a land use type is defined as not only the actual cover of land with vegetation, but also the functional use of land and the social values attached to the different land-use types. For instance the term *kibanja*, which refers to the plot with perennial crops, is the place where the owner builds a house for his family and a cattle-shed for his few cows. In this house he stores his coffee and other agricultural products. Thus the first *kibanja* is the center for the nuclear family life and the center for the management of the farm unit. The father will usually be buried in his *kibanja* and the eldest son will inherit the largest of his father's *kibanja*, including the part where the tomb is situated. Therefore a *kibanja* always carries with it emotional and social implications attached to kinship and descent. The different farm units or *bibanja* plots, with residential houses scattered all over the area, together form the village.

Social organization in Bu-Haya society is profoundly circumscribed by patrilineal kinship norms, which divide up the society and place members of families into clans. Patriarchal authority is strong, powerful and very influential. People in Bu-Haya society practice clan exogamy[5] and patrilocal residence. This entails the wife moving into her husband's clan territory after marriage. The children belong to the husband's clan. High levels of polygamy can be found among Ba-Haya and other ethnic groups of Kagera region (Lugalla & Emmelin, 1999).

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[5] Exogamy is the prescribed practice of marriage outside the kin group, the boundaries of which are defined by the incest taboo.

The majority of the farmers in Bukoba District utilize land held under rights of clan ownership and the land is inherited patrilinearly and thereby is restricted by the rules pertaining to land under family[6] tenure (Cory & Hartnoll, 1945; James & Fimbo, 1973; Rald & Rald, 1975; Smith, 2000). The *kibanja* is vested in one member of the family who may not sell or give away the *kibanja* without the consent of the members of his paternal family. The *kibanja* may also be acquired by purchase. Land thus acquired becomes the property of the buyer and *during the owner's lifetime* he may dispose of it to anyone he pleases, by sale, pledge, gift or disposition by will without restriction (Cory & Hartnoll, 1945). However, rights of individual ownership are temporary since after the death of the owner, the *kibanja* is converted back to family tenure (Rald & Rald, 1975; Cory & Hartnoll, 1949) with the aim of expanding the clan land and also keeping control of land under the clan (Tibaijuka, 1996; Rald & Rald, 1975; James, 1971). Rights of women to landed property are very confusing, as will be shown in the following chapters.

Methodological steps

Locating a site

The exercise of identifying a suitable place for conducting this research began while I was still in Dar-Es-salaam. I had already made up my mind to conduct this research around Kagera region mainly because of the prevalence HIV/AIDS in that area between the 1980s and 1990s. Literature indicated that there was an increasing population of female heads of households in that area, which was one of the criteria for the selection of the research site. The thought of going to Kagera to conduct a community-based collaborative research was intimidating. Since I am not originally from that area, I contacted my colleagues at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to assist me in terms of providing general information about the area. It was important for me to begin this process of trying to envision a community to work with, before traveling to the research site.

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[6] According to Cory & Hartnoll (1949) a Ba-Haya family consists of all near relatives. All descendants of a common paternal ancestor in the male line are near relatives and all members of one clan are distant relatives.

While I was still in Dar-Es-salaam I sent letters, to those villages for which I had access to addresses, about my intention of conducting a research study in their community. I did not feel comfortable waiting for their response and by the end of February 2002 I decided to travel to Kagera to visit the earmarked villages. Fortunately, the branch office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security provided means of transport during the exercise of identifying a community to work with. There was no accommodation allocated for visitors in the first village that I visited so I rented a room in a guesthouse for a few days. The village leaders indicated that there was no such problem as 'women and land rights' in their community and that it will take time for the right committee to discuss the issue before they could sanction a go ahead for me to conduct a research study. I was aware that informal approaches can be just as fraught with difficulty, with one elder consulting others on one matter, and then the consultation process goes on and on. Thus, by the second week of March 2002, I decided to move on to subsequent villages according to my list. Moreover, living in a guesthouse proved to be uncomfortable and quite inappropriate for the type of work I was to embark on.

The exercise of moving from one village to another was not an easy one but I was looking for villages that not only fit the criteria spelt out in the research proposal, but would also provide an environment which is appropriate for my writing and reading. After visiting six or more villages I finally found a village where the village administrators were cooperative and willing for such a study to be undertaken. More importantly they mentioned that, indeed, 'women and their rights to land' was a problem that needed attention in that community. I was fortunate that in the same community there existed a governmental institution, of which the administrators willingly allowed me to stay in one of the staff houses during the time of my data collection exercises. I did not know that the comfort of living in a modern house with electricity and tap water, and also occupying one of the offices, would interfere with the process of gaining entry and establishing rapport in the village.

Gaining access and establishing rapport

An important step in the process of doing this research study was to find people to study or work with, and to gain access and establish rapport so that the participants willingly engage in the work and produce the desired data. Within the village that I was to conduct my study there are four different communities known as *vitongoji* in kiswahili. Since I was not quite sure whether the participants would come from one *kitongoji* or from all of them I began with visiting the offices of these four *vitongoji* to meet with leaders and talk to them briefly about my research and the logistics of meeting with women. They were comfortable and agreed with my proposal to arrange meetings with women. I managed to hold meetings with women in all four *vitongoji's* on separate days to talk about my intention of doing research with women and ask them to participate in this research study. I was aware of the ethical implications of having the list of names for the potential participants being listed through the leaders of the *vitongoji* therefore I announced, during those meetings, where I could be personally contacted by others interested in participating, either at my residence or in the office that I was temporarily occupying.

Much as there was an indication of excitement during those meeting none of the women turned up. I was getting nervous and quickly thought of a different way of getting closer to the village women. Then I found out that there were female extension agents located in each of the *vitongoji*. Based on my professional background I identified myself with them, we became friends and visited one another frequently. I also remembered that I had a friend that I went to school with, whose home village happens to be my potential research site. I managed to get the information about his parents and where they were located, and we became friends visiting each other frequently. The neighbors and relatives of my friend's parents and the extension agents became my acquaintances and it is in this way that I expanded my circle of associates. After awhile I was adopted by that community as one of their members. I attended different cultural functions, everything from weddings to funerals, and people in the village began to treat me as one of the members of their community.

Through this kind of interaction I came to understand that the place I lived was for the people considered to have a higher status than that of villagers and there was barely any interaction between people from these two communities. I also became aware that a few women tried to contact me at my office and even at my house but were chased away by neighbors. The question they were asked was 'what on earth would you want to see our visitor for'? Here it was considered that I belonged to that particular group of people where I lived, where villagers have no access. Thus, much as the residence and the office seemed to be appropriate for my comfort and my writing, it was not suitable for accessing or working with potential research participants. Thanks to the friendship that I initiated with people, I was able to establish rapport with people before the beginning of the interviews.

Participant selection

The first part of the research study involved an individual interview, which was a procedure used to identify those women who would be involved most actively in the study and to determine whether or not they fit the criteria. The first criterion was that the potential participant should be a female head of household (single unmarried or a divorcee or a widow). The second criterion was that the potential participant should be facing a problem either of accessing, controlling or has been dispossessed of, her piece of land that she cultivates. My question/request was "please talk to me about the land problems that you have faced"; "for how long have you been experiencing this problem?" "What have you done to try to solve the problem"? I also asked about the period of time during which the participant had experienced such problems and things that she had attempted to do to solve the land problem.

As such this initial individual interview was done in a story telling method, as I let women describe what they perceived to be a problem in terms of their rights to land. Their responses were a form of self-definition as 'people who are affected by the problem of access and control of land', rather than me as the researcher identifying them as 'affected people'. I ended each interview by clarifying to them the benefits of the study (as mentioned in the consent form) and by asking if the woman was interested in joining a group of other women to discuss problems they were facing and possible alternatives to problems. Finally, on the basis of those interviews and women's willingness to participate, ten (10) women agreed to join in a learning group where they would address the land issue. Moreover, the individual interview gave me a chance to get to know the participants as well as to give them a chance to check me out.

Although I had earlier on planned to work with widows, divorcees and single unmarried women only, the selected women included two married women. I decided to invite the two after they requested to participate and corrected my assumption that it was only female heads of households that are adversely affected. According to women, sometimes, married women too are severely affected by lack of access and control over land. Moreover, they felt that they had insights to share with their female-headed household counterparts in the study.

Generally, this part of the fieldwork went smoothly and I encountered few problems. The major difficulty was the cancelled appointments with potential research participants. Because there was no other means of communication, I usually made several long trips to their homes before we set up a convenient time and place for the individual interview to take place. Even after agreeing to a particular time, the women were often unavailable at the agreed venue and time.

Methods of data collection

Meetings and dialogue

This research used various techniques of data collection including individual interviews; observations; and existing documents but the primary data collection and working procedure was interactive group dialogue. The purpose of doing individual interviews, as mentioned earlier was to identify the potential research participants. The interactive dialogue was the main activity undertaken as we proceeded with data collection and preliminary data analysis. (In the next section I will describe what I mean by preliminary data analysis.)

Dialogue is a methodological feature that distinguishes PAR from other social research. It is a forum whereby marginalized women come together to listen to each other's stories and learn from each other. The aim of using interactive dialogue in this research was to provide an opportunity for women to share their life experiences as related to land access problems and to develop a deeper understanding of their situation through a participatory dialogue. This goal is in line with what proponents of participatory methodologies advocate.

For instance, Maguire (1987) posits that participatory dialogue begins by looking at the phenomenon from the participants' point of view and by helping research participants see themselves as knowledgeable people. Smith (1999) and Hart (1990) further assert that each story from research participants is a powerful contribution to a collective story. That is, participants will contribute different experiences and at the end, by connecting related issues the stories will reflect a holistic picture of their marginality. In similar vein, Park (1993) notes that this process does not just enable people to reveal private facts that are hidden from others but they learn to know themselves better as individuals and as a community.

When it came to proposing the venue and scheduling of our dialogue sessions, care was taken to involve the participants in suggesting a convenient place for them. I was ready to go wherever they wanted me to go. We (research participants and myself) finally agreed to meet once a week for our proposed dialogue sessions. To begin with we held our dialogue sessions at my residence, because participants wanted privacy and since I was alone living in the house provided it was very convenient for both of us. As we were approaching the end of our dialogue sessions, research participants wanted to take the responsibility of hosting the meeting in turn.

The learning group and the sessions

Ten women participated in this research study. Much as the group was homogeneous (since the women encountered similar problems), there were profound individual differences based on ethnicity, religion, marital status, age and years of schooling. The group was comprised of six widows, two married women, one divorcee, and one single unmarried woman. Eight members of the learning group were from the Haya tribe and the two were Hangaza; eight members were Christians and two Moslems. Age difference ranged between 33 and 65 years. Years of schooling ranged from no schooling at all to 14 years of formal schooling.

Despite these demographic differences, group members were not distinguished by any major differences that signify social or political differentials. While social stigma was always attached to divorce, widowhood, and spinsterhood in rural communities, it did not pose a problem to the learning group because the majority of the group members were not married. Such a commonality allowed the environment of mutuality whereby group members were comfortable in sharing their personal experiences about their problem.

Communication during the research process and the dialogue was done in Kiswahili, which is the main language of communication in the country. Only at times when group members were emotionally aroused and were having difficulty expressing themselves in Kiswahili did I ask them to feel free to speak their tribal languages (Kihaya and Kihangaza), which are mutually intelligible. As such group members spoke their languages and they understood each other.

During dialogue sessions, the same members of a dialogue group (10 women) met ten times, thus making ten dialogue sessions. On the first day of our dialogue session I took care to begin the session in a friendly way and yet in a manner that would stimulate group members' willingness to talk and share ideas. Therefore I started with a story about the conflict between my three aunts and their brother, over 'accessing and controlling' their father's farmland. This story relates to the women's situation. Group members freely asked me questions and together we shared views and opinions about the story that I shared with them, as indicated in chapter five.

The first dialogue session was more of establishing our relationship than anything else. I was the only one who shared a story and listened to participants' views and opinions during the first dialogue session. However, every group member had a chance to share her experience during the following three dialogue sessions, except the member whose story I had selected to be told last, as a 'trigger' story for group discussion of the issues. The schedule of the dialogue sessions is as follows: During the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th dialogue sessions we had three members in each day narrating their stories. We repeated the same pattern of activities in succeeding dialogue sessions. Before starting our routine talk, we basically reviewed summaries of the previous discussions every time we met. This was a kind of reflecting on our earlier thoughts. Then the group members shared their opinions and views, in a similar manner as we conducted the first dialogue session. Each dialogue session took about an hour and a half. During the early phase of dialogue sessions, group members were still shy and did not ask many questions to the presenter.

Drawing from Freire (1973), Wallerstein (1988) and Wallerstein & Sanchez-Merki (1994) I came up with the idea of having a 'trigger' story to stimulate group members' discussion. A 'trigger' story represents a 'code' According to Freire, a 'code' is a concrete physical representation of an identified community problem in any form: photographs, slides, songs, role-plays or stories. Wallerstein & Sanchez-Merki, in their explanation of Freirian listening-dialogue-action model in ASAP program (Adolescent Social Action Program) described the use of videos as 'codes' to trigger discussion among participants. It is in the same context, I used one of the group members' stories to be a 'trigger', to stimulate group members' discussion. Since I was aware of each of the participants' stories I was in a position to decide which one among those stories would be a 'trigger story'. It was the most salient among other stories, which provoked emotional response from the group members and which inspired women to talk freely about their feelings and be able to share their experiences as related to their rights to land. I planned to have the trigger story as the last story to be presented, that is, on the fifth day of the dialogue session.

It is a common practice in many indigenous contexts for elders to be approached as the first point of contact and as a long-term mentor for issues related to traditions and cultures of a community. Thus, in addition to sharing their experiences, listening to the trigger story, reflecting on the triggers story and relating it to their own lives, during the sixth dialogue session group members had the opportunity to consult two community elders (based on their own selection). While, the seventh dialogue session focused on a discussion of what they finally wanted to do, whereby they decided to establish a solidarity group, the eighth session was a consultation with the Village Executive Office. I perceived these consultations as a collaborative reflection on their problems. In the ninth dialogue session the main task was to assign duties amongst group members to act on all activities agreed upon. Details on their discussion, consultations and decisions made are included in data chapter 6 and 7.

Although I had arranged to have a collective final interview to discuss what group members had learned throughout the dialogue sessions, it was not easy to do that as everybody was busy working on various given tasks to make sure everything was set for the newly established solidarity group. Instead of this interview, women shared their views when I talked to them individually, which I did whenever I had a chance to do that. In addition to that, participants had the opportunity to disseminate the knowledge they had acquired to a group of women from another village. The tenth dialogue session was the last one and it was our dissemination day. Group members had invited three representatives from three different villages and three members volunteered to make a presentation. Most of what group members had learned was conveyed to others during this dissemination exercise.

Facilitating the dialogue sessions

Part of the research project involved taking part in leading the activities held during a dialogue sessions. Right from the beginning I informed group members that it was important that each group member would get a chance to experience and learn how to lead a group discussion. The main task was to lead the dialogue session, which begins with opening up of the meeting, reviewing notes from the previous session, welcoming the speakers of the day and organizing the way discussion goes, for instance to give individuals turns to speak. Therefore, I asked group members to take turns in leading a dialogue session on a particular day. They all accepted the request.

What I noticed was that whoever led the meeting, be it a Moslem or Christian or from whatever denomination, we would always begin with a short prayer mentioning the tasks to be accomplished on that day, and then conclude the prayer by saying "we ask you our lord to lead us in this discussion". After this short prayer the facilitator would review the summary of the previous meeting and announce the issues of our discussion on that particular day.

Observation

I lived with community people from February 28, 2002 to September 11, 2002. In between I took a 10 days break around mid-April to travel to Dar-Es-salaam for official matters. Basically I am talking of spending around 24 weeks with the people at the research site. During that period of time I was interacting with people, visiting, listening, 'observing' and learning about interacting behaviors, what people do, who does what, why it is done that way and what words are used to describe the issues. Hence my 'observation' was ongoing all the time I lived with the people in the village, at their homes, in their farms while they were working, at church, at the primary court, at funerals, weddings and other cultural ceremonies. During the dialogue sessions I not only listened to the content of dialogue but also 'observed' women's body language and the way they related to each other. I recorded such observations in my daily field descriptions.

Documents

As group members were proceeding with the dialogue sessions they had an opportunity to browse through related government documents titled "*Sheria ya ndoa*" or 'marriage act' and *mwongozo wa sheria* or 'legal guidelines'. In this way group members were able to access information on some aspects of matrimonial property rights and other related legal procedures.

Translation

My decision to locate the study in this specific area met one major constraint, namely, my failure to speak and understand the local language used by the people. Whereas the group members were conversant with Kiswahili and all communication during the research process and the dialogue was done in Kiswahili, which is the main language of communication in the country, in a few cases they could not articulate their views without recourse to their Kihaya language. In such situations, particularly when group members were emotionally aroused and were having difficulty expressing themselves in Kiswahili I did ask them to feel free to speak Kihaya.

However, as group discussion proceeded, one participant, especially the one leading the dialogue session, would translate to me what was spoken in Kihaya. In addition, I asked them to approve an external translator to assist confirming the translation. Group members identified a female extension officer as a competent and dependable translator; she listened to recorded audiotapes and confirmed the translation.

Methods of data analysis

In this research study the analysis of data was accomplished in two phases. The first one was basically the analysis by group members analyzing their situation as related to their land rights. They accomplished their analysis through dialoguing and reflecting on information about their own experiences of the problem encountered plus information acquired through consulting village elders. Basically their process of analysis included listening to each other's stories, asking and responding to questions about their experiences, reflecting on various ideas discussed about their problem, making decisions and reflecting on decisions made. This phase of analysis ended when the village women prepared a comprehensive plan to address their situation.

The second phase of the analysis involved my own assessment of women's changing understanding of their situation and their capacity to translate that understanding into pragmatic action plans. This part of data analysis was accomplished through coding to identify categories and themes. The initial step involved reading the conversation (dialogue) transcripts and observational notes so as to develop tentative ideas about categories. The text of individual interviews and the literature suggested codes such as women as sufferers, sharing a piece of land, eviction from parents home, eviction from husband house, conflict with male relatives betrayal by one's own sons. When pulled together these categories suggested an overall theme of 'manifestation of disempowerment'.

While this initial analysis focused on how participants identify themselves as 'sufferers', the continuing data analysis pointed towards how group members engaged in the process of understanding their situation. Thus, as we proceeded with dialogue sessions and by reflecting on theoretical concerns from data, I generated additional categories like, keeping silent, emotions, motivation to act, mutual cooperation, interaction through friendship, sharing ideas, making decisions critical questioning, contemplating, imagination, common sense knowledge, awareness of social rules and consultation. Finally through pattern coding I clustered these categories into constructs (analytical skills, Critical questioning, creative imagination and agency); and relationships (social solidarity and social networking), which finally merged into themes of awakening and interactive relationships as explained in chapter eight.

Ethical issues

Within the local community's context, research ethics extends beyond issues of individual consent and confidentiality. People in rural societies in Tanzania live and work together in identified communities. As such it was necessary to request a community's consent for doing a research project in their community. I followed normal procedures to obtain official approval from village administration before the commencement of my research project, as shown in appendix A. I also held discussions with village authorities on the purpose of my research project. The village authorities were convinced that the research project was worthwhile and within their interests.

The ethics review approval from the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, was also undertaken before commencing the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, as indicated in appendix B. During individual interviews, dialogue sessions as well as any photographic activity, the informants were asked for their permission to have the conversations recorded or photographs taken. It was also for ethical reasons that pseudonyms were used instead of real names of these women.

All research participants were assured of confidentiality in all phases of the research. All issues discussed within the group were treated as confidential. Group members selected the external translator as the person they trusted and she agreed to keep all discussions confidential. In addition to that, during the research process a few research participants pointed out that it was okay for them to share their experiences through conversation, however they did not wish their stories to appear in text. I took this as an ethical issue and respected their concern. In another instance one participant said that she did not want the group members to summon her male relative for interrogation, she preferred the village authorities to do that instead. This too was an ethical issue and I persuaded group members to respect their colleague's feelings.

Issues of validity

A valid inquiry refers to a sound, convincing, and well-grounded research process capable of representing findings according to intention. According to Lincoln & Guba validity as a model of evaluating rigor in qualitative research is the assessment of trustworthiness or "how a researcher can persuade his audience that the research findings are worthy of attention" (1985:290). Criteria for establishing the trustworthiness of findings include the requirements for credibility, applicability, and confirmability.

The goal of credibility is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that it can be accurately described (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In this study all variable situations and interactions in addition to theoretical concerns are derived from the data. Lincoln & Guba (1985:307) note "the probability that findings and interpretations based upon them will be found to be more credible if the inquirer is able to demonstrate a prolonged period of engagement with the research participants." During this research study I stayed at the research site from March 2002 to September 11, 2002. My prolonged engagement with research participants was to ensure that I invested sufficient time to become oriented to the situation including learning people's culture, building trust and showing them that I respect them and their input.

The goal of the second criterion is to demonstrate the applicability of findings to another context, which entails the relevance of the study. Data in this study was obtained directly from participants' experiences of the problem they encountered. The participants of this study (women who were adversely affected by weak rights to agricultural land) were deliberately selected on the premise that through that experience they have gained valuable knowledge and insights about solving the problem, which was confirmed in findings of this study. As such this research can be applied in a variety of settings not just limited to women and land rights.

Confirmability refers to a concern whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by another (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In other words it is a concern whether the data helps to confirm the general findings. Confirmability is achieved when credibility and applicability are established, as described above. In addition to that, if participants' voices are represented fairly, then it is easy for someone else to confirm the findings based on data. This is related to Lincoln (2000) notion of ‘fairness which refers to respect to inclusion in inquiry effort, whereby all voices and research participants’ stories are treated fairly and with balance.

Lincoln (2000) also talks of ‘educative authenticity’, which is designated as criteria for determining a raised level of awareness, by individual research participants and by those who surround them. According to Lincoln (2000) the notion of ‘educative authenticity’ is reflective of Schwandt’s (1996) notion of “critical intelligence,”or Schwandt’s (1996) defines critical intelligence as capacity to engage in moral critique, which is based on practical wisdom. It is in this perspective that Schwandt emphasizes that social research inquirers must endeavor to enhance participants’ capacity for practical wisdom. In this study Schwandt’s concern is mirrored by the impact of the researcher and the researched relationship, which indeed stimulated and recovered research participants’ practical wisdom in their endeavors to solve their land problem.

The notion of ‘educative authenticity’ is also related to Lather’s (1991) notion of catalytic validity. According to Lather (1991; 1986) catalytic validity represents the degree to which the research process leads to insight and activism on the part of the respondents. The insights gained from the research process are expected to liberate the participants in terms of expanding their capacity to alter their situation. Lather (1986) advocates not only the recognition of the ‘reality altering impact’ of the research, but also on the need to consciously channel this impact so that respondents gain self-understanding and, ideally, self-determination through research participation. Reflecting on the purpose of the research study reported here, the findings show that through the collective learning process that women were exposed to, their understanding of their situation was enhanced, which enabled them to work out a plan of action to address their problem. Lincoln (2000) supports this idea of creating the capacity in research participants to act for positive social change when she talks of catalytic authenticity. For her, catalytic authenticity refers to the ability of a given inquiry to prompt emancipatory community action on the part of research participants.

Chapter Five: Manifestation of disempowerment

Before presenting the interactive dialogue that women engaged in I want to bring to the attention of readers the plight of women's disempowerment. My wish was to present the situation of disempowerment from the perspective of a single unmarried woman and show how the situation differs from the perspective of a married woman, and that of a divorcee and that of a widow. However, some of the research participants did not wish their stories to appear in text. Nevertheless, the four stories, which will be presented below, although not the most salient prototypes, depict women's subordination in their rights to land in different ways.

Despite the fact that I had the protocol section of my research proposal well spelled out, on the first day of dialogue sessions I wondered how to begin the dialogue and how to stimulate participants to engage in a well-articulated discussion. One of the things that kept me wary was participants' expectations about how the research would be conducted. I became cautious because during our interactions they would always refer to me as their 'technical advisor and educator' by saying in Swahili "*mtaalamu wetu amekuja kutuelimisha*" meaning 'our technical advisor is here to educate us'. I suspected that research participants expected the researcher (myself) to have enumerated questions for them to answer.

Thus, I had to find a polite way of letting them know that the type of research envisaged here was different from the usual question-answer type of investigation. Rather, I told them we were going to create a friendly kind of relationship between them as co-researchers and myself as the principal researcher. I emphasized that this was going to be a collaborative operation whereby we shall both learn from each other. I also mentioned that all our dialogue sessions would be based on what they know and each of the group members was going to share her experience.

I started by telling them my story about the conflict between my three aunts (my mother's sisters) and their brother, that is my maternal uncle, over 'accessing and controlling' their fathers farmland. As I was talking to participants, I noticed that some of group members kept on nodding their heads as they listened attentively. The 'nodding' was a good indication that group members were beginning to identify themselves with this kind of interaction and might be willing to share their experiences.

Do we have a choice?

I then asked group members to share their views on the story that I had shared with them. One of them simply said, in swahili '*wanawake ni watu wa mateso*' meaning 'women are born to suffer'. The rest of the group supported her. I went on to ask them the reasons why they would believe that women are born to suffer. To answer the question one member responded in Swahili *"kuna vikwazo chungu nzima tangu siku mwanamke anayozaliwa."* That 'woman's many problems begin on the day she is born'. The second one supported her by saying "*ni mwanamke gani ambaye hana matatizo? Si wasichana, si walioolewa, si walioachika na wala si wajane*". Her statement was put in a form of questioning, "I have never come across a woman without problems, be it young girls, single unmarried women, married women without children, married women with children, divorcees or widows." When I asked for elaboration on the problems they were referring to, their discussion focused on the intricacies of married life.

Group members mentioned that most families in their village have a tendency to look forward to marry their daughters. The 'coupling process' happens very fast, to the disadvantage of the woman. According to group members there is no time for two people who are intending to marry to get to know each other. As such, one is not quite sure what to expect in a forthcoming married life. Usually a girl meets a guy who offers a gift to the girl. If the girl accepts the gift then it is the indication that she has accepted the enticement. It does not really matter how long they have been seeing each other; it could be as brief as during the first or second meeting so long as the guy is attracted to the girl. If the guy is serious then marriage arrangements begin. News of courtship would spread amongst relatives and shifting of the bride to the husband's clan residence follows almost immediately. Since the bride and groom-to-be do not have time to get to know each other, some women ended up getting married to men who already had more than three wives.

The realities of matrimonial life begin to show up almost immediately when the newly married wife starts to familiarize with her new life. Common problems that group members pointed out include the inability of the husband to provide for the family, quarrels between co-wives about sharing a small piece of land and other related conflicts within the family. Group members had the opinion that in most cases there is nothing one could do to solve the problems; one has to live with the situation.

Group members also talked of married life as it is today compared to marriages during their parents' generation. They wondered why marriages do not seem to work these days. According to group members, in the past households were much more organized and there was harmony within and between families. Every head of the household would provide for the family in terms of providing a piece of land for cultivation and they never knew of their fathers being irresponsible. The situation is so different today whereby it is almost a woman's burden to provide basic necessities, not only for the children but for the husband as well. They said in kiswahili *"siku hizi wanaume wengi hawana uwezo kifedha"*. It means that most men are financially crippled these days.

Then I wanted to know what were the repercussions of such burdening marriages. Women argued that leaving one's married life is as bad as staying. They kept saying in kiswahili "*ukitoka nyumbani kwa baba yako umeshatoka*" meaning "when your parents send you off for marriage, you are counted as 'gone or absent', and there is no way one can access resources from her father's family". On the other hand, walking out of your married home is risking a divorce. Getting divorced means losing not only children but also access to land resources. Moreover, there is a social stigma attached to divorce and widowhood. The Ba-Haya men rarely marry a divorced woman. Once a woman is divorced she will remain single for the rest of her life. Since women do not wish to lead such a stigmatized life they opt to stay in their unhappy marriages. One group member commented, "do we have any choice; this is our destiny". Then we had opportunity to hear stories from each participant and one, Fortunata, shared her story as follows:

> *Married women face similar problems as single women and widows. Many women get married to old husbands probably with four other wives; each wife has a number of children. Let us say one has five children, the other wife has seven children, four children from another wife and six children from the youngest wife. And in most cases the husband would own just a small piece of land to be shared by five wives with their forty or so children, for their livelihood.*

> *The problem is how to distribute such a small piece of land between several wives so that they can produce food for their children. And for some reason most husbands are biased, in terms of how they distribute that piece of land, some wives are likely to get a bigger share than others. The problem becomes worse when the husband dies and in most cases it is the beginning of conflicts between family members. Shortly after the funeral family members start filing cases up to the court. The deceased's children start fighting over land saying, "this is my mother's piece of land" and the wives say" this is my children's share". Even grandsons may come up fighting for land.*

She also shared her views about the differences between male and female members of the family:

> *Actually my father once said to me that male members of the family do not marry out, they stay back in their parent's home and that is why they are entrusted to take care for the family land. Since females always marry out, their stay in their parents home is temporary, because female children are expected to move out and live with their husbands. It is common to give a daughter just a single coffee tree as a share of inheritance. But my question is how can one rely on a single coffee tree as a source of livelihood, in case she is not married? Some parents might be more flexible and may provide a small portion of land for all daughters in a family to share. So that the unfortunate female members of the family, who may not get married would come and use that piece of land as their farm.*

Fortunata sounded desperate and hopeless. She felt life was miserable and there was need for a change. She regarded my visit as a rescue, hoping that I may have a solution to women's problems. This is what she shared with us:

> *When I heard about your visit (referring to me) I became interested, I said maybe this will be the end of our subordination! In reality women in this area are mistreated. It is unbelievable that at times even your own children become the major opponents; they can even evict you from the house when they grow up! If your own children come to a point of evicting you from your home, where do you go? You end up crying not knowing what to do! We have nowhere to run to. At times one is forced to beg for food. But even begging has its repercussions; some people do not like to be bothered with begging so they throw you out, sometimes insulting you. That is why I was so excited when the news of your arrival spread.*

Her main argument was that all women encounter difficulties in terms of accessing and controlling agricultural land. Indeed, widows encounter similar problems as Hamida tells us:

> *My husband died way back in 1996 and left me with six children. He left me a small piece of land, about two acres for food production to feed the whole family. Before he died he wrote a will, but he did not specifically leave anything for me, everything we owned was passed over to our children. My children and myself occupy one side of our house because I have to share it with my co-wife. We also share the small piece of land that my husband left us. When my husband died none of my children was independent. I struggled so much for their education and I managed to educate them up to standard seven.*
>
> *My eldest son was born 1975, second born 1977, third born 1979, fourth born 1983, fifth born 1985 and the youngest one is in her first year of primary education. The second born is disabled, he cannot support himself for anything. Although he is now twenty-four he totally depends on me for food and clothing. The one born in 1983, has just finished standard seven, he is not employed yet. He occasionally works as a laborer so he can earn something to buy his clothing. My parents are taking care of my third born, they took him to my home village for schooling. The last-born is in the first year of her primary education.*
>
> *It is very rare for a woman to inherit land from her husband and this is common to most women in this area. Only children inherit from their fathers. My biggest concern is that, despite my struggles to make the best for my children, I suspect when they grow up and get married they would bring their wives here, because essentially this is their house. And since they will have the authority at that time they might chase me away. Considering the fact that I did not inherit anything from my husband, suppose I am to be chased away, I am just wondering where would I go? I will be old and tired by then, it would be impossible for me to wander about looking for jobs. In any case will I have the energy to work as a laborer? I do not know whose guest I would be.*

Hamida is insecure; she foresees the possibility of being evicted from her home. How disheartening it is for someone to anticipate something bad to happen especially after she had struggled so much to provide the basic necessities for her children. While Fortunata and Hamida had a premonition of being evicted from their homes, Koku's experience of 'eviction' was real, as she tells her story:

> *I lost my husband about six years ago but I could not stand the whole situation at Kiziba, I had to come back to my parent's home. I was married to a man who had two wives already and he had a total of twenty children from the three of us. I thought it was not worth it to stay at Kiziba after my husband's death because my husband's kibanja was about two and a half acres only. My husband's farmland was not adequate to produce sufficient food for the whole family. There was no way this piece of land could be divided between twenty children! Therefore I decided to return to my parents' home and live there. I took my children with me.*

My going back to my parent's home was a blessing in disguise because when I reached home I found my father was in a very poor health, actually he was bed ridden for months already. I was happy to be there to help my mother with all the domestic chores, farming and taking care of my sick father. Unfortunately my father passed away a few months after my return to my parent's home.

As usual after the funeral, on the day of matanga my brother was announced the main heir. As the main heir, he inherits full rights of his father's farmland and whatever property his father owned. On that very day my children and myself were ordered to move out of our late father's house since we did not belong there. We were told to go back to Kiziba, because that was my children's home. Staying at my parent's house was considered as trespassing. Since it was only three days after the funeral I pleaded with my brother to wait for a few days more as I was still mourning my father, but my brother was adamant and he started throwing our belongings out of the house. It was late at night and I moved out with my children crying not knowing where to go. Neighbors, friends and relatives were looking at us being thrown out but could not do anything to help us. I finally decided to go to church and pastor Deo received us, fed us and allowed to stay at the church until we found a place to rent.

It was a painful experience considering the fact that I took care of my father during his sickness for months. My brother lives far away in Arusha, it was my mother and myself struggling through with my father's illness, looking after the farm, making sure coffee and banana farms were weeded, taking care of the farm products and all the domestic chores. These are some of the issues that my brother was not concerned with at all. He did not even bother to know how we managed during those difficult moments! He was oblivious of what was happening at home while my father was very ill. Only to come and evict us from my father's home! I do not understand some of these traditions that denounce women from their own families once they are married. Is this fair?

Koku was evicted from her parents' home, something that Fortunata and Hamida predicted would happen to them. Koku's eviction confirms the earlier statement that "when parents send you off for marriage, you are counted as gone and that you can no longer access land from your father's kibanja."

We acted but were only frustrated

I then asked group members whether any of them had attempted to deal with the problems they had encountered. Group members confessed that they all have tried to seek solutions in one way or another, particularly filing their cases with primary or district courts. So far only one had succeeded to get the *kibanja* she inherited from her late husband after fighting for her right for four years. Perpetua had to borrow money and traveled to Dar-es-salaam to meet the Minister for Home Affairs, by the name of "Mrema" who seemed to be sympathetic to women; she was successful in getting back her husband's *kibanja*.

At the time when I was conducting this research the remaining two members had their cases yet to be determined. They were complaining of getting tired of making several return trips to Bukoba (24 kilometers from the village) for years. To the best of their knowledge they are making these trips only to sit outside the courtyard waiting for the magistrate,who they reported did not have the courtesy even to show up in court. Instead the court clerks re-schedule the hearing dates, for a hearing which was not forthcoming. One group member lamented, "we are trying to do something to solve our problems but we end up being frustrated,":

> *Basically my problem was difficulties in meeting the basic necessities, particularly food for the family. I have a big extended family. Currently, I am taking care of six grand children but there is no peace at home because my husband and me cannot afford to make the ends meet. As I was contemplating on what to do, an idea crossed my mind, "if I get access to my fathers land, life would be different." I finally came to the decision that I should claim for a right on my father's kibanja. If my sisters and I succeed to get at least a part of that farm we can sell some of the farm products or we can use some for home consumption. While members of the clan council supported me all along my struggles of fighting for my rights, I had difficulties dealing with the defendent and all court procedures that followed.*
>
> *I had problems with this relative since 1997. He started selling a portion of our father's rweya farm, not the main kibanja. Let me go back to the background of the story. My father had a younger brother, and they had inherited a farm from their father, which they split between the two of them, so the two vibanja were adjacent to each other. Mind you our father and his brother (Mbiza's grandfather) shared a rweya land." My uncle had a son, my cousin brother, who is Mbiza's father. Therefore the relative that I am in conflict with (Mbiza) is a grandson of my uncle. When my cousin brother passed away for some reasons he disinherited his son (Mbiza). At the time of his death, Mbiza was not in Bukoba, no one knew where he was, he never communicated with his family and relatives.*

> *After his father's death Mbiza decided to come back home. He redeemed his father's kibanja and settled at his parent's home. Thus, his kibanja and our father's kibanja were adjacent.*

Later Mbiza decided to sell his father's *kibanja* and the *rweya* land in order to offset his financial debts as the story continues:

Although he managed to redeem his father's land he kept on selling portion after portion of his farm to strangers until nothing was left. Then he started selling the rweya land that belonged to my father and his grandfather. At that point my sisters and myself felt it was necessary to intervene. Therefore I visited regional land offices just to get some clarification on whether Mbiza had a legal right to sell my father's rweya land. I was advised to face Mbiza and ask him as to why he sold that piece of land. When confronted Mbiza sounded very apologetic.

According to Anatolia this is what Mbiza said:

> *I am sorry my aunt I was forced to sell that piece of land after my daughter was expelled from school because of not paying tuition fees, and it was hard for me to think of ways to raise the amount of money they were requesting. Apparently it came to mind that I should sell a piece of our ancestor's rweya land, with a point in mind that I will inform you of the transaction, unfortunately I became too busy that I failed to inform you in time.*

For Anatolia this story was just a lame excuse. She felt that land transfer is not a simple matter for one to perform without notifying the trustees of the land, let alone be a close or any distant relative within the clan. She suspected that Mbiza did not intend to inform her of the transaction and kept wondering what could be Mbiza's motive. She said:

> *I did not accept being busy as an excuse of transferring land inappropriately, so I told him: "The fact that you know that the land belongs to our ancestors should have been a good reason for you to involve relatives or at least some members of the clan council before selling the land. Since you decided to sell land without our*

> *notice I suggest that we make an arrangement to demarcate the land so that we know exactly what belongs to you and what belongs to our late father. Without hesitating he agreed to my proposition."*

Anatolia made sure that she followed the right channels for her plans of demarcating the land. She did not want to make any mistakes. At the same time it was important for Mbiza not to raise any suspicions; that is why he had to accept Anatolia's proposition to demarcate the land. The story continues:

> *During the week that followed my conversation with Mbiza I consulted some elders in the village and two distant relatives. I even paid for service charges for these people to visit and demarcate our farmland. Although elders were supposed to demarcate both the rweya and kibanja farms, they ran out of time. Therefore, only rweya land was demarcated and not the kibanja land. The elders had arranged to continue with the exercise at a later date. The pronouncement to demarcate the kibanja land irritated Mbiza. He was so much infuriated.*

Mbiza retorted (as reported by Anatolia):

> *I do not want anyone to demarcate the kibanja, and I think I was too lenient to have allowed you people to demarcate the rweya land and this is because I had sympathy on you but since you are not grateful for what I have done to you, I am going to deal with you accordingly if you dare to show up around my kibanja.*

Interestingly, Mbiza's utterance was no longer apologetic! It seems the idea that Anatolia wants to take control of her father's *kibanja* land annoyed Mbiza and progressively Mbiza's reactions and fury opened up into a clearer picture. At that point Mbiza was using threats to stop Anatolia from pursuing her 'mission to justice'. Even the elders realized that the issue was much more complicated as Anatolia describes the situation:

> *At that point the elders decided that they would not continue with the exercise of demarcating the kibanja land until after the decision of the clan council. Thus, I had to make arrangements for a meeting where Mbiza, members of the clan, and myself will have discussions on the land dispute. But Mbiza deliberately did not show up for three consecutive meetings that we held. The final resolution of the members of the clan council was to visit Mbiza's house for further discussions.*
>
> *On our first and second visit Mbiza walked out on us, he ignored us and did not speak a word to us. On the third visit he told members of the clan council that he*

> *would not listen to any stupidity they came for, he can only deal with authorities either at district or regional level but not with local stupid people like them.*
>
> *Clan members were so annoyed with the way Mbiza addressed them and decided that they would not continue fighting with Mbiza. In order to assist me they provided me with a letter to go to a 'certain institution' in town that normally assists women to fight for their rights.*

It seems Mbiza was not playing his game very tactfully because he eventually succeeded in offending members of the clan council. He exhibited blatant disrespect not only to the local authorities but also to elders and women (the three sisters), who happens to be his father's relatives. He even insulted the authority of the clan council. Consequently, it was becoming too difficult for clan members to handle the case, and they instructed Anatolia to go somewhere else for help. Anatolia continues with her story:

> *When I visited the offices of this 'institution' I was informed that people who normally deal with such complaints were scheduled to visit our village on the following Monday and therefore I should wait till that day to present my case on that day. So I was at the meeting when these people visited our village, and as usual my opponent did not show up. After I had presented my case I was asked to appear in their office, which was located in town a week after. Finally these officials provided me with a letter to send to a 'ten cell leader' to get hold of Mbiza.*

It seems there was a deficiency in terms of giving the right directions on exactly where to report the matter or where such a case could be dealt with. Anatolia traveled back and forth between her village and town to consult different people. While it was difficult for Anatolia to get the right directions, there was no mechanism to make Mbiza accountable for his activities. Eventually, there was evidence at last that the *kibanja* belonged to Anatolia's father, as she tells in her story:

> *Fortunately Mbiza appeared and he told the officials that I was just being mean to him, that my father did not own any kibanja at all, that I do not know what I am doing and that I am putting up this claim because I am mentally confused. It was then decided that I should call upon my two other sisters to confirm whether or not the kibanja belongs to our father. When they appeared in that office a week later our eldest sister who acted as our spokeswoman confirmed that the kibanja*

> *belonged to our father. We as daughters were entrusted to look after our father's kibanja. Since my two sisters live far away from our home village where the kibanja farm is located, we decided that I should take care of our father's kibanja; this is why I was more involved in following up the matter.*
>
> *At that point the officials decided that we should go back to the local authorities so that the kibanja land could be officially handed over to us as rightful inheritors. As usual Mbiza did not show up.*

Much as the evidence was in favor of Anatolia (and her sisters), Mbiza still did not acknowledge these women's claim. It is sad on the part of the government that even the local authorities and clan members were getting tired of pursuing the issue indefinitely. And for Anatolia the battle was still on, as she confesses:

> *I did not despair. I went to consult one resident magistrate who happens to be a distant relative of mine, for some advice. He was surprised as to why I had to pursue this matter with an institution that had nothing to do with land disputes. He kept saying that I visited a strange institution that had nothing to do with issues of inheritance or any related land disputes. He also informed me that there was a newly established government institution, known as the Village Reconciliatory Board that deals with all family disputes including land inheritance. So he gave me the letter to present at the Village Reconciliatory Board.*

Earlier on Anatolia was misguided and she consulted an institution that had nothing to do with land disputes. Anatolia's roaming around might be interpreted as not knowing where she was supposed to go. Fortunately, she had a knowledgeable relative who offered the right information that she needed. The question remained as to how other people might access such information? What if they do not have informed relatives to guide them? What happened to Anatolia suggests that people are not informed of the changes in the government system; they have been left behind. In addition, there is no information on how to deal with problems. Meanwhile Anatolia continues to fight for her rights:

> *When I visited the office of the Village Reconciliatory Board and presented my case they asked me to pay for a service charge, which was 10,000 shillings, for them to come and visit my father's farm. They consulted clan members and Mbiza for some clarifcation for their deliberation. It took three months for them to*

> *conclude our case, and it was decided that I was the victor and that I was entrusted with my father's land. After that decision Mbiza started cultivating my father's kibanja, then he uprooted 280 tree seedlings that my sisters and me had planted during the environmental campaign. When I reported him at the primary court the ruling was that he should repay all the costs incurred of planting the trees.*
>
> *One day, as I walked home late in the evening from a friends place I met Mbiza and he attacked me. He started beating me up and kicking me bitterly. If it hadn't been for the group of people who were passing by Mbiza would have killed me. Again I had to report the matter at the primary court. I had my rescuers as my witnesses, but to my dismay we were remanded for two weeks, for a claim that we attacked Mbiza.*

As Anatolia continues with her story, we see two things happening. One and foremost is that Mbiza was not ready to accept the fact that he had lost the case. He appeared to feel justified to harass Anatolia physically. Secondly, Anatolia experienced a long, convoluted effort to obtain justice, which was not forthcoming. Anatolia continues with the story:

> *After some time Mbiza appealed for our land dispute. When I appeared at the court I was told that the case was not properly instituted. Officials at the primary court are accusing the Village Reconciliatory Board to have caused the confusion. It was claimed that the officials at the Reconciliatory Board do not know anything on legal procedures. They are oblivious of the different provisions of civil and criminal cases. Eventually, I was advised to file the case afresh.*

The event suggests that there is a conflict of interest amongst the government institutions. The primary court officials are undermining the work that was done by the reconciliatory board. If officials at the primary court were confident of doing a good job why couldn't they do it earlier on? While the agenda for these two government institutions is not known, what is the impact of the behavior to individuals with problems that needs attention and resolution? This is what Anatolia shared:

> *I walked out of the courtroom crying hysterically, I did not know what to do; I was totally confused. I was concerned because my case was taking too long to be*

> *determined and most of my witnesses were now dead. Soon I will have no one to stand as my witness. So many questions came to mind but I did not have a clue on how to go about solving them.*

Anatolia has allegedly reached a point of despair, and most likely this is where Mbiza wanted to put her. Unfortunately, the primary court is condoning her demise. Anatolia feels like all her efforts have been wasted as she continues to share her feelings:

> *I am horrified especially because Mbiza has threatened to kill me. I have no security and these people attending my case keep on delaying telling me to come here, go there, and change this and that. Can't they see the truth? What I foresee is that even the government is supporting Mbiza's intentions of destroying me, actually the government is taking part in my destruction.*

Anatolia's perception of threat to her is very real. Fear and despair is quite evident from her story. She is insecure and she does not trust the justice system. Anatolia concludes her story with a note of bewilderment and a question perhaps relevant to all women.

> *Up to now six years have elapsed, I still do not have full rights for my father's kibanja and so many other problems have begotten in the process of pursuing this land dispute. I am so scared to continue pursuing this matter. I am just thinking what if Mbiza really kills me. Do I really deserve this?*

What do these images, and these voices of lament tell us? Among various social institutions, it seems, marriage and motherhood are valued in this community. The pride of a proper woman is to have a husband. The wife is expected to produce and raise children successfully, particularly sons for the continuity of the clan. For instance, Hamida was left with six children when her husband died. She had the obligation to feed the family. These women had to work hard to produce sufficient food for their children. They wanted to be certain that they are doing the very best for their children and that their children are not deprived in any way.

However, their stories depict a condition of dependency, which is reflected by their limited access to land. Throughout their lives these women were dependent and their lives reflected their propertylessness. For instance, before Fortunata, Hamida and Koku, were married they lived in their fathers' *vibanjas*, in other words they were their fathers' dependents. When they were married their dependency was transferred from parents to their husbands. Consequently these women are economically vulnerable. The sharing of a small piece of land among co-wives makes the situation worse. Since a woman in Bahaya society always farmed her husband's land, her basic economic security could be severely threatened by divorce. In case of marital disolution, women are forced to seek wage work, otherwise they could be left destitute. Probably due to their vulnerability they prefer to stay with their husbands, irrespective of the misery they encounter.

Taking into consideration customary practices, these three women were estranged from the basic resource (land) from which they can make a living. This estrangement is from both their natal and nuptial homes. One would assume that when sons inherit their fathers' *vibanja*, they would not deprive their own mother's rights to use land. However, Hamida's premonition of eviction from her house suggests that sometimes sons too betray their mothers. In some cases the situation forces widows to return to their own clan-land, which is their parents' home. But returnees are regarded as trespassers, particularly when the land is under the custody of the brother or any designated male trustee. Koku's eviction is a good example of the precarious position of a widowed mother.

It seems to me that my group members are not oblivious of their social position in society. For instance, the generalization that 'there is no woman without problems' suggests that they are aware of the fact that women as a category are unable to pursue their interests (Kabeer, 1999). I am saying this because when I asked them to share their views about the story, their immediate response was that 'women are born to suffer'; a very fatalistic stance. This spontaneous response suggested that they are aware of their situation but they do not know what to do about it. As Kabeer (1994:228) rightly said "Women may be aware of the circumscribed nature of their lives without necessarily knowing what to do about it". That is why, as I was narrating the story of Mamzigwa, Mamntanga and Nenkondo, group members were nodding their heads. This was non-verbal communication to me indicating that they were identifying themselves with the story that I narrated. Furthermore, group members' elaboration on the courtship process, the state of absenteeism they refer to, whereby female members of the family are regarded as non-existent in their natal families, the intricacies of married life, all of this sharing is evidence of the knowledge they have about their situation.

For most women, effective rights in land remain elusive. It also appears that women rarely realize the rights that contemporary laws have promised them. In addition, male heirs are still unlikely to relinquish their privileges of inheriting and having control over agricultural land. For instance, we have seen in Anatolia's case, that the male kin (Mbiza) used various forms of intimidations. He initiated a costly litigation against Anatolia, who has been fighting for years, who still did not acquire effective control of her father's *kibanja*. In addition to that, Mbiza resorted to direct violence and threatened to kill Anatolia because she continued to insist on exercising her rights.

The way courts of law were said to operate need not be re-emphasized. Most often the outcome of the dispute is uncertain, but in many cases the wife and children of the deceased end up being dispossessed of their property, depending on how cunning the claimants are. For example when Mbiza had physically harassed Anatolia, it was eventually Anatolia and her witnesses who were put in jail for wrong accusation. Mbiza had both privileged access to the land, and privileged accounts for what "really" happened between him and Anatolia, which authorities believed. Constraints such as these adversely affect rural women's ability to function as independent farmers. For women to better understand their situation, they embarked on rigorous dialogue sessions about their experiences, as we shall see in the next section.

Chapter Six: Questioning the decision of the clan council

The goal of dialogue sessions was to create open group discussions where women could learn through the exchange of ideas among themselves based on their individual knowledge. Each group member was unique in many respects and each group member was resourceful in her own way. The differences in their age, religion and years of schooling provided a wide range of diversity their knowledge. The knowledge shared varied from traditional and culturally rich knowledge to formal knowledge acquired from school and places of work. This variant and diverse knowledge was embodied within their humbleness, creativity, pragmatism, imaginativeness, compassion and arrogance too, as group members also had varied personalities and capabilities.

I created a situation whereby group members focused their attention on understanding the plight of 'Rosanna', who provided the trigger story. After listening to the trigger story, group members were asked to reflect on it and to give their opinions about Rosanna's episode thereafter. Below is a summary of Rosanna's experience.

Rosanna, sixty-three years old, was a sonless widow. She comes from the distant Ba-Hangaza ethnic group and had been married for more than thirty years to Patrick who is from a Haya tribe. When Rosanna got married, her husband Patrick had two children, a son and a daughter, from his first marriage and later had a daughter from Rosanna. Then the husband got sick and was bed ridden for five years, during which Rosanna intensively took care of her sick husband. Unfortunately, during his sickness, his youngest daughter, who is Rosanna's only child, died at age

28. The deceased left behind a baby girl to be taken care of by her parents. Two years later, Rosanna's husband died too.

Patrick's death brought changes in Rosanna's life. Ordinarily, when a person dies, a special meeting (which is called matanga) is held four days after the death. It is during this meeting that the clan council disposes of the properties, claims, and debts of the deceased. The role of the clan council in these circumstances is purely administrative and is guided by rules and customs of the tribe. During Patrick's matanga it was announced that the death of Patrick concludes Rosanna's stay at Patrick's homestead. Thus, Rosanna was requested by the members of the clan council to pack and leave at once because according to Haya customs, Rosanna was no longer entitled to live in her husband's kibanja. This was to happen despite the fact that she lived there throughout her adult lifetime and worked on her husband kibanja during her married lifetime. The fact that she took care of her sick husband alone for five years without any help from the relatives was entirely disregarded.

The news of her eviction came as a complete shock to her. She was appalled and at that point she even considered going back to Ngara, (her natal home) as the only alternative. But there was a bottleneck that hindered the accomplishment of her wishes. Rosanna had left her home in Ngara when she was only fifteen years old, moved to Bukoba to look for a job when she met her husband Patrick and got married. She had never gone back to Ngara since she left in her teens, even for a visit. She had doubts about going back to Ngara particularly because she was aware that her parents and two brothers are no more. She was also ignorant about the situation of her distant relatives and she feared that she might not be received in her natal village.

Consequently, Rosanna had to stay on at her late husband's house despite her eviction order from Patrick's relatives.

Much as Rosanna insisted on staying in her husband's kibanja, she led a miserable life and was extremely insecure. She lived in an old dilapidated house, unsuitable for human residence. The walls on one side of the house had already collapsed; everything was falling apart. There was no one to help her renovate the house or at least build a new hut to live in. In addition, Rosanna was forbidden to harvest bananas from the kibanja even for her young granddaughter and her own consumption. She is compelled to work as a laborer in other people's vibanjas for her survival. She has no support whatsoever, either from individuals or from the village government. She struggles in solitariness to cope with ever intensifying poverty.

Group members were sympathetic with the realities of Rosanna's miserable life. It is amazing how group members had much to say as they discussed Rosanna's episode. They were all excited and spoke with feeling. Below I will give segments of the conversation by group members after Rosanna finished her story. The conversation, with 10 participants, p1-p10, consists of questions posed to Rosanna[7], her responses, and ideas from various members as the discussion progressed:

Hamida (P2): Did your husband write a will before he died?
Rosanna (P1): Yes
P 2 Is the way this will was written similar to what your husband used to talk about your fate?
Veronica (P3): Actually they did not say much but they emphasized that Rosanna should leave immediately and go back to her home village Ngara

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[7] All names are pseudonyms. P1 is Rosanna, P2 Hamida, P3 Veronica, P4 Egi, P5 Anatolia, P6 Theo, P7 Koku, P8 Heriana, P9 Fortunata, P10 Fatuma. Participant numbers will be used to designate them through the rest of the text. See Appendix D for details.

Rosanna: Jovin, a grandson of Patrick's brother presented the 'will' and he claimed that the original will that was written by the deceased was not acceptable because at the time the deceased wrote the 'will' he was quite debilitated.

Heriana (P8): 'Clan members' argued that Rosanna's late daughter had a rightful claim for her father's *kibanja* but not her. Apparently Rosanna should leave the *kibanja* at once since the daughter is no more.

P2: Did your husband chase you away or mention anything about you going away before his death?

P1: (*Sobbing while she spoke*) Not at all. Actually he always said to me that I should not go to Ngara. He told me to stay here at our home until I die.

There are three things to be noted from this conversation. First and foremost Rosanna, participant 3 and participant 8 were present during the matanga meeting, the rest of group members were not. Secondly, it was reported that the deceased wrote a will but the relatives did not accept it. They claimed it was invalid because of the claim by members of the clan council that the deceased was debilitated at the time he wrote it, and in that case the 'will' did not represent the deceased wishes. And group members, particularly participant 2 probed for more information and clarifications from Rosanna. Rosanna's friends confirmed that, without any discussion, the clan council decided that Rosanna should go back to Ngara. At times participant 3 and participant 8 responded to questions posed to Rosanna before she responds, probably because they were present during the matanga meeting and because they were Rosanna's close friends. Participant 2 appears to ask many questions probably because on that particular day it was her duty to facilitate the dialogue session.

According to the discussion, group members seemed to suspect that something is not right with the way Rosanna's case was handled by the clan council. The claim that the original 'will' written by the deceased was void reinforces the suspicion. It is surprising that the original will which was claimed to be invalid, was not read to the people that attended the meeting for them to decide on its validity.

Group members also tried to figure out how Rosanna and Patrick fared or what the situation was like before Patrick died. For example when participant 2 wanted to know whether Rosanna was, by any chance, chased away by the husband at any one point of their married life. Group members were also comparing the deceased's written and verbal communication to his wife in order to find out what Patrick's wishes were.

I mentioned earlier that the role of clan council is administrative and is guided by the rules and customs of the tribe. Maybe it is important here to refer to the Bahaya custom on the fate of a widow. According to Rald & Rald (1975) if the husband dies the woman leaves her husband's land unless specifically told otherwise by the heir. Normally the eldest son is the main heir. Seemingly, members of the clan council were taking advantage of what is stated as Bahaya custom. To the extent that group members were suspicious of the clan council's decision they were motivated to know more about Rosanna's eviction and the investigation became more intense as they continued with the discussion:

P3: Go to Ngara *(sarcastically)*? For what reason should you go to Ngara ? What about the labor that you spent on the farm for all these years?

P4: Why should you go to Ngara, this is your home. Who are Patrick's close relatives?

Rosanna: Yunis and Jovin are the only of Patrick's relatives available. Yunis is Patrick's niece and Jovin is a grandson to Patrick's brother.

P3: I was there during and after the funeral since most of Patrick's close relatives live far away from here Jovin decided to bring over Yunis so that they both claim the right of access and control of the *kibanja*. (*Angrily*) It is sad that Rosanna is not allowed to harvest even a bunch of bananas, not even a Banana leaf from the farm! (*Pose*)

P3: (*Angrily*) when Rosanna moved here for the first time she was still a teenager; her breasts were quite firm! There is need for us to think deeply and try to understand why was she evicted from the *kibanja* despite the fact that she had worked on the farm for the past 30 years!

The focus of the discussion held on that particular day was centered on the question of 'why' Rosanna should go back to her parents, why she should leave her husband's home. Normally any decisions pertaining to transfer of kibanja land can only be done with the consent of the nearest members of the clan. Taking into consideration the fact that Patrick's close relatives were not available (as it was reported) it was questionable as to who were the members of the clan council.

When Rosanna shared her experiences with other group members they seemed to sympathize with her. Although they expressed their feelings differently, mostly they pitied her. They were trying to imagine what would have happened if they were in Rosanna's place. For them it was beyond imagination that Rosanna could be refused to harvest from her own farm, in her own home! Group members became so angry and at times they seemed unable to control their temper. They began an avalanche of remarks in outbursts; they all wanted to speak at once, particularly participant 3 sounded very angry whenever she had anything to contribute. They felt that Rosanna has been used up, and they did not see the point of her being sent back to her parent's home, the place where she is a total stranger. They even referred to time and labor she invested in that home during all her adult lifetime. And at times group members expressed sympathetic feelings for the victim and were motivated to get deeper into their investigation.

There is no doubt that Rosanna had a strong attachment to the farm. Her whole life had been spent on that farm. For her to be forbidden to touch anything from it was a serious act of severance. In an actual sense Rosanna was grieving not only the loss of her daughter and her husband but she was also grieving for the loss of the farm.

Group members were angry because they believed that Rosanna's eviction and her subjection to misery were unjustified and she had been harmed by Jovin's intentional actions. Group members' anger added to their curiosity of wanting to know more about Rosanna's plight.

Most of the participants were concerned with the question 'why', why was that happening to Rosanna, and they tried to get the arguments out, to be clear. Others were concerned with what happened after Rosanna was evicted from her home as the discussion indicates:

P2: I am interested to know what steps Rosanna took after all these misfortunes?

P3: I once visited Rosanna and I advised her to consult the women's councilor who later on urged Rosanna to consult the social welfare office in Bukoba. The councilor suggested that Rosanna pay for both their bus fare to and from Bukoba town. But Rosanna did not have any money at all and so she suggested that they walk to Bukoba. The councilor was not ready to walk 26 kilometers (return journey) and so she refused. Since Rosanna was not certain that she would be successful and since she had financial constraints she decided not to pursue the matter with social welfare office.

P2: Yo yo yo! She stopped pursuing the matter! (*Facing Rosanna*)You mean there was nothing you could do?

Rosanna: I really wanted go to social welfare offices but there were rumors that I would have to pay 3000 shillings[8] for the service in addition to the bus fare! From where could I raise that kind of money?

P3: I do not understand why Rosanna was discouraged; I fail to understand what is going on in her mind! I am very optimistic that social welfare people would assist Rosanna; and then things would have been different by now.

P2: I do not see how could Rosanna fail to get 1000 shillings since her husband's death, that is five years ago! I am failing to understand if she really is determined to pursue this matter?

Group members anticipated some reaction from Rosanna since her life was at stake. And if she at all attempted to solve the problem what happened thereafter.

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[8] 1000 Tanzanian shillings is equivalent to 1 Us dollar, thus 3000 shillings amounts to 3 dollars

Once again Rosanna did not respond to some of the questions directed to her, instead a close friend of hers by the name of Veronica (participant 3) responded to the questions asked. It was also brought to the attention of group members that there was an attempt to begin working on this problem. Rosanna and her friend Veronica started with what they probably thought was appropriate; they consulted the Women's Councilor.

Unfortunately things did not work out for her as they expected. It appears that Rosanna was at first inspired to act by her friend Veronica but she was later discouraged to continue with her mission due to financial constraints. Veronica and Rosanna relied on the Women's Councilor assistance, in terms of getting the right information for them to continue with their mission of pursuing Rosanna's land dispute. Regrettably, the Women Councilor was receptive only up to certain a point. When it became clear that finances were involved to help Rosanna, the Councilor expressed unwillingness to offer assistance because she did not have money for transportation charges.

Rosanna's failure to continue with her mission affected group members in various ways. Some group members could not understand her reasons for being discouraged and blamed Rosanna for her lack of motivation to act. Rosanna tried to explain that she could not afford to pay 3000 shillings for a problem that might not be solved. Yet for others 3000 shillings was just a small amount of money; they could not understand how on earth one could fail to raise such a small amount of money. They interpreted her failure to continue pursuing her problem as some sort of capitulation. Although some members felt that it was possible to raise some small amount of money to keep them going, probably Rosanna's case was a bit different. If she could not afford a meal for herself and the granddaughter, it must have been difficult for her to think of raising 3000 shillings on top of transportation charges. Nevertheless, other group members sounded more sympathetic to her as the discussion below shows:

P4: No, I think we should not blame Rosanna here; she is just being overwhelmed by the whole situation that she is facing right now.

P2: Rosanna has another problem too. I do not think she is cooperative in terms of sharing her problems with others.

P4: You people do not understand, all that is happening to Rosanna is way beyond her ability to understand such a complex problem that she is facing right now.

P3: I think one major stumbling block Rosanna is facing is lack of proper guidance in terms of where to go and whom to consult and means of getting where she would like to go. She is totally lost.

Different members had different opinions on Rosanna's reaction to the problem. Participant 4 was trying to put herself in Rosanna's place. She feels that what Rosanna is encountering is not a minor problem, rather the whole situation was too overwhelming and that the victim was unable to handle it. To participant 4 it is not the question of Rosanna being willing or not to act, she feels that the case is just too complicated and is beyond Rosanna's ability to solve. While participant 4 looks more at the intensity of the problem and how the victim is affected by the problem, participant 2 connects Rosanna's lack of motivation to act as the byproduct of her personality. Participant 2 claims that the victim is a reserved person and she does not share much of her personal problems with others. According to Participant 3 Rosanna's hands were tied and she is stuck. She could not travel to appropriate places because of financial constraints. Having no money is part and parcel of Rosanna's life. That is her reality. In addition Rosanna lacks guidance and she does not know where to get the right information she needs. What group members are saying is that there are many contributing factors that might have led Rosanna to act the way she did after she encountered such a devastating problem. Having realized that the situation is complex, group members shifted the discussion towards 'seeking solutions' to Rosanna's situation, as the dialogue shows:

P10: Why don't you consult your husband's daughter to see if she could be of any help?

Rosanna: Sarah (the deceased's daughter) has never been home since her father's funeral. She might be thinking that everything is all right with me.

P3: Friends we need to be cautious and think before we advise Rosanna on anything. Here we are talking of someone that has never shown up since her father's funeral, is she a reliable person? Can she really help Rosanna?

Rosanna: Actually I wrote Sarah several letters and she has never responded. I even had sent someone to that community, where she lives, to give her all the details about the problems that I am facing here, but up to this day she kept quiet.

P10: Five years of discomfort, stress and misery must be a horrible experience! Rosanna needs some guidance in terms of seeking solutions to her problem. Since you (*referring to me*) are here why don't you lead her onto the right direction before she perishes in the web of sufferings?

Researcher: That is a good suggestion. Rather than myself instruct on what to be done let us deal with this matter as a group. For all of us sitting here let us decide on how can we assist our friend and colleague? She is aware of the existence of social welfare office and she tried to get some help from the Women's Councilor. But due to some circumstances it was not possible for her to access that government tool. Can we share some ideas on what we can do to assist her? In other words what suggestions do you have for such a situation?

Group members seemed to be somehow thinking of ways to solve Rosanna's problem, and they came up with two suggestions. One way was to consult Patrick's daughter, probably with an assumption that Sarah, the daughter, would positively respond to Rosanna's predicament. This is some sort of kinship responsibility in the well being of the stepmother by the stepdaughter. However, Veronica had a different view from others; actually Veronica had been very critical of the whole situation. First of all Veronica doubted that Sarah was someone to be relied in terms of assisting her stepmother. Furthermore, Veronica questioned Sarah's long silence after her father's funeral. While Sarah's reasons to keep silent are yet to be known Veronica's argument refreshed Rosanna's memories of her unsuccessful efforts to try to contact her stepdaughter. Rosanna talked of the letters she wrote to Sarah and other various means of contacting her, something that she might not have talked about if it were not for Veronica arguing against relying on Sarah.

The group members' second option was to seek help from the researcher. In a way group members felt that I had the capacity to solve their problems. Although I was being delegated to come up with the solution to Rosanna's predicament I returned the task back to them. I emphasized that it was a task for the whole group to seek solutions for their problems. I took the responsibility of making them understand that they need to take responsibility to understand and seek solutions for their problems. Just before group members began to suggest ideas of how to deal with the situation, participant 2 shared her views on what she thought Rosanna should have done immediately after the matanga meeting, as the dialogue shows:

P2: Immediately after the will was read Rosanna should have insisted that a grandson cannot interfere with her late husband's inheritance. She should not have kept quiet. She should have reported the matter to the village government right from the beginning. The village government officials would have called upon Jovin for questioning. If anything the officials would have referred Rosanna to higher authorities to pursue this matter.

Researcher: Let me ask you Rosanna, have you reported this problem to any of the authorities in the village government?

Rosanna: Yes I did, but nothing happened.

P4: In addition to what Rosanna said I myself, during one of our village development committee meetings, brought up Rosanna's case for discussion. I asked if there was any plan in terms of assisting Rosanna to renovate the house and pursue her land dispute. The village chairman responded 'we are aware of the issue and we shall work on it.'

P3: In addition to that, I remember that the village chairman had called upon Rosanna to present her problems to him, but the chairman kept silent thereafter. They are just fooling around with her. These village authorities are good at playing games on people.

Others: *Walitaka chochote!* (*it sounded like a chorus*) 'They wanted 'something' more than just complaints.'

Rosanna: Actually just a day after I had a meeting with the village chairman I saw the chairman sitting with Jovin at the local beer club, chatting and enjoying local beer. The presumption I had immediately was that I have lost the case and that was the end of everything. Jovin had won the case.

From this conversation participant 2 shared what she thought was ideal for Rosanna to do at the matanga meeting. According to participant 2, Rosanna should have protested from the beginning; that is immediately after her eviction order was announced, instead of keeping quiet. In other words participant 2 expected Rosanna to resist. Participant 2 felt that Rosanna's silence might have indicated acceptance of the eviction order. But Rosanna's reaction might be interpreted otherwise. Despite the fact that Rosanna did not protest the eviction immediately, in some ways she was not ready to move out of the house, and actually she did not leave the house as requested. Her reactions suggest that she might have had similar intentions of 'protesting' but in a different manner. In addition to the presumed resistance, she actually did something else showing that she was not passively accepting orders.

Apparently, Rosanna had the opportunity to meet the Village Chairman and talked about her problem although nothing much happened thereafter. An additional effort was made by participant 4 who happens to be a member of the Village Development Committee, whereby she raised Rosanna's issue for discussion during one their committee meetings. Again nothing much happened. Moreover, Rosanna became uncomfortable after observing Jovin and the Village Chairman in a social situation, alarmingly, after the official meeting was held between Rosanna and the

Chairman. On top of a confidentiality problem, Rosanna interpreted the whole situation to be corrupt.

Can't we do something?

These occurrences suggest that Rosanna was silent only in terms of not uttering a word during the matanga meeting but was not silent thereafter. She unsuccessfully had made an attempt to act against what was imposed on her. She was unable to move to the next level of her mission due to the negligence of the Village Chairman. Interestingly, the way the group members responded in a chorus '*walitaka chochote'* suggests that the way Rosanna's case was handled was not a unique situation. Much as there is an indication that group members were quite aware of the complexity of the situation they insisted that Rosanna should have continued to pursue her mission:

P2: Although there was an indication that village authorities wanted something more, would that really stop someone from fighting for her rights! To me their request for something more would have been a motivation to proceed with seeking a solution to this devastating problem. Rosanna, you should have talked to friends and colleagues about whatever was hindering the progress of your pursuit. One can benefit a lot from other peoples ideas, let alone the financial assistance!

P8: I think each of us can contribute some money to enable Rosanna pay the bus fare to the township, in that way she can consult social welfare officials.

P3: Let us forget about social welfare in the meantime. I think what is more important right now is for us to decide to work together and help Rosanna renovate her house. Once she gets a decent place to sleep and basic necessities then we can take up arms with whoever is fooling around with Rosanna. We should also seek assistance from the village authorities to summon Jovin to come and speak about the conflict between him and Rosanna in our presence (with emphasis). Thereafter we will consider about going or not going to social welfare.

The question 'why' did Rosanna succumb to Jovin's wishes was still unanswered. Participant 2 was still pondering as to why Rosanna couldn't see beyond her situation. Apparently she had an insightful suggestion that receiving 'advice from others' was fundamental for learning, especially when solving a problem. While participant 2 wanted things to happen enthusiastically and systematically, participant 8 sees contributing money for transport charges would at least bring Rosanna to Bukoba town to visit social welfare offices. It seems participant 8 fails to understand that the problem is not only the bus fare. She could not recognize the multiple variables that are surfacing as Rosanna pursues her mission to justice.

Then Veronica came up with her ingenious contribution. She prompted others into this idea of rescuing Rosanna from her lack of basic necessities. For her it was necessary to deal with the immediate needs first and deal with the source of the problem later. She was careful to itemize what was to be done in order of her prioritization. She suggested not only collective rebuilding of Rosanna's house but also confronting Rosanna's opponent collectively. The message here was clear, she was indirectly saying, 'we have the power, we have to hear what Jovin has to say.' She also suggested involving village authorities in terms of informing them whatever decision the group members make. In addition to her ingenuity she also demonstrated an enormous degree of empathy. Veronica's inspiring motive did not pass without some objection, as the discussion below indicates:

P2: Who are we to summon Jovin?

P3: It is important to hear his side of the story. We want to listen to him, write every word he says and after we asked him questions then other governmental procedures would follow, because we really want the local government to intervene and assist us in solving this matter.

P10: Definitely Rosanna needs to get that letter from the village chairman as soon as possible and we need to suggest a date for this great meeting with Jovin. We really want to know why this is happening here.

Participant 2 disagreed with participant 3's suggestion of summoning Jovin.

Her questioning, 'who are we to summon Jovin?' could have various interpretations. May be she was cautious or thinking of the consequences of summoning Jovin'. On the other hand, the same statement may imply lack of confidence. That is, participant 2 was not quite sure whether group members had the authority to summon Jovin. And she was also thinking whether it was worth doing it at all. Still another interpretation could be 'we are worthless'; 'we are powerless'; 'we cannot do that'! For sure it is not known what was going on through participant 2's mind, however, all through the scene she desperately wanted something to happen. Probably what she did not want to happen is to let her fellow group members go beyond their limitations. She was just being cautious.

Nevertheless, Veronica adequately responded to the question raised by participant 2. She said there was a need to listen to the opponent's story. Listening to the other side of the story would give group members the opportunity to ask Jovin any unanswered questions. Veronica, it seems, wanted Jovin to be accountable for putting Rosanna in that situation, however, she wanted to put the process on the road before other governmental procedures are pursued. She just wanted to see justice done. Fortunately, Veronica succeeded in persuading other group members to go along with her proposal. Most of them felt that there was a need to get more information from Jovin on how he understood the situation. Group members became enthusiastic in their wish to interrogate Jovin. Gradually, others, including participant number 2, who once disagreed with Veronica, started dancing the rhythm. Seemingly, she has been influenced by the flow of discussions as the conversation shows:

P2: According to my views, if we had a social system that works properly and genuine village and government officials, Jovin would be serving a sentence by now. I cannot imagine a grandson to the deceased brother interfering with issues of inheritance in a family.

P11: I entirely agree with the earlier speakers that we should find a way of getting a hold of Jovin, preferably through the village government so that he gets an opportunity to talk about Rosanna's episode

What participant number 2 is saying is that it was unfair to have Rosanna suffering while no action has been taken against Jovin. She might by now have realized that what happened to Rosanna was a crime against Rosanna. Probably she has also realized that there might be some hope for change if group members handle Rosanna's case well. Eventually they all reached a consensus and were all inclined to confront Jovin. Then surprisingly, Rosanna's friend, who was present during the matanga meeting daringly, gave details of Rosanna's situation, as group members were about to confront Jovin.

P8: Before we summon Jovin I have some clarifications about Rosanna situation. Rosanna had a daughter and three other stepchildren, that is Patrick's children from his first marriage. Unfortunately the daughter passed away but Patrick and Rosanna continued to live together as a couple despite them losing a daughter. Consequently, the *kibanja* was distributed among the three children, from Patrick's first marriage. Nothing was provided for Rosanna's daughter since she is no more. Patrick's eldest son was there when the 'will' was read and he inquired about Rosanna's fate saying, "where have you placed Mama?" Clan members responded 'no where, she should pack and go back to Ngara'.

Rosanna: Actually, when they read the will I was not present.

P8: What you do not understand is that this issue is so complex and I do not think we can interfere in this matter because so far there is no place that Rosanna can access. The *kibanja* was divided among the children who had the rightful claim for their father's land. Since Patrick's children live far away from here, Jovin hired a caretaker to look after the farm. While the caretaker is responsible for tilling and weeding the banana crop, Yunis is responsible for marketing of the beer bananas. The caretaker is allowed to cultivate the land and to grow beans or any other food crop if he wanted to. I think it would have been justifiable for Rosanna to claim for these rights if her daughter had been alive. This matter is so complex and we cannot do anything about it.

P4: I beg to disagree with you on that point; I strongly believe that Rosanna was supposed to get her share from the *kibanja*. The death of her daughter should not be taken as a basis for her eviction.

P2: After all she did not wish for her daughter to die. We really need to understand her situation and be sympathetic especially now that Rosanna is grieving the loss of two people that were very close to her.

P3: Why should they look for a caretaker, isn't she already a caretaker herself. She has been taking care of the farm for the past 30 years!

P2: Rosanna's case is highly shady and ambiguous. We need to investigate the whole issue from the beginning, from scratch. We need to know who was present at the *matanga* meeting, who made what decision and why Rosanna's daughter was not considered. If it is possible the whole exercise of distributing the *kibanja* land should be repeated. Death should not be taken as a good reason for Rosanna's daughter to be excluded from inheritance. If Rosanna's daughter was excluded because she is no more the granddaughter is still alive. Doesn't she have a rightful claim to the piece of land that would have been given to her mother?

It is difficult to tell what motive participant 8 had, but she emphasized that those who were responsible for Patrick's kibanja are taking care of it and she further insisted that nothing could be done to change the situation. It was difficult to understand why Participant 8 emphasized that 'nothing could be done' about Rosanna's situation. Indirectly, Rosanna's friend was using all her efforts to discourage the group members from pursuing the matter.

Nevertheless, participant 8's efforts to discourage group members not to pursue Rosanna's mission to justice did not succeed. Some group members presented a different point of view as they tried to bring a different logic into this issue. For instance, participant 4 and participant 2 totally disagreed with participant 8. They defended Rosanna saying that she had a rightful claim to her husband's kibanja. Rosanna needs sympathy rather than harassment, particularly now that she is grieving the loss of two people. Veronica too defended Rosanna on the issue of taking care of the farm. She did not see the point of hiring a caretaker while Rosanna who took care of the farm for over 30 years is still alive living in the same kibanja! She vehemently argued that due to Rosanna's good care of the farm she justifiably deserves a reward rather than a punishment. In summarizing the discussion participant 2 appealed for the whole issue to be looked into once again and more thoroughly.

Researcher: Thanks for the clarification but let us continue discussing Veronica's suggestion of summoning Jovin. Can we have more contributions and suggestions on that?

P4: Let me ask Rosanna something. What is your opinion on this issue of us calling upon Jovin to talk to us about your inheritance. Do you see any problem with that?

Rosanna: (*fumbling*) I doubt if he would like the idea and I foresee more problems to come on my part.

All: This is becoming a bit complicated!

P3: How possibly could we continue debating and pursuing the problem we think is devastating to you while you are not really committed to pursuing the matter? The idea behind this is to help and not to put you into more problems; we do not want to be seen as pressuring you. Just be open and sincere to yourself. If you are hesitant then we should not continue pursuing the matter. It is for you to decide what you want to do. Now tell us what do you want.

Participant 4 asked for Rosanna's opinion about summoning Jovin. It seems participant 4's request was appropriate and timely because it appeared that Rosanna was not comfortable with the idea of consulting Jovin, she was completely hesitant. Interestingly, when Rosanna was at first asked for her opinion, it looked as if group members wanted her to speak up as to what was on her mind rather than them (group members) making decisions for her. In any case it was a good thing to do since it demonstrated some respect for Rosanna's feelings and opinions. On the contrary Rosanna's response resulted in anger. Group members were agitated by Rosanna's hesitation and were in a confused state. Probably they expected their colleague to support their idea of confronting Jovin when Rosanna backed off.

Discussions on Rosanna's episode went on and on without stopping and group members seemed to enjoy the exercise. Most likely it was their first time to share and dialogue on such emotional experiences that affected them all. All members had powerful voices, as anyone could tell from the talk that had raged around the room for two ferocious hours. What was more important was the journey they went through cognitively from the moment Rosanna introduced her story, through the entire discussion to the point they concluded the dialogue session. Throughout group members are seen to undergo a 'thinking through' process as they probe for and acquire information. Throughout their 'thinking through' journey, their main concerns are:

- What is happening?
- Why should Rosanna go to Ngara?
- What did Rosanna do after she was evicted?
- How come things did not work out as anticipated?
- Can we do something about it? Are we going to do something about it? What are we going to do about it?

As these questions came to their minds they agreed to take 'action'. Group members agreed to collectively re-build Rosanna's house and to also confront Rosanna's opponent collectively. The fixing of the house would definitely build up Rosanna's self-esteem. This decision implicitly implied a 'movement forward'. However, there was some indication that the decision was not unanimously accepted. As noted, during the discussion p8 emphasized that 'nothing could be done' about Rosanna's situation. Much as she was a friend to Rosanna, she was very skeptical. Indirectly, she was trying to discourage the group members from pursuing the matter, a counteraction to the 'forward movement'. It was at this point that group members outwardly projected their enthusiasm and it was the beginning of collective strength.

Their determination was obvious.

Furthermore, there was a realization that group members still had some questions unanswered. They needed more information from the following:

- Information from Jovin on how he understood the situation
- Information from the village authorities on Rosanna's right to stay at her husband's house

To this extent, it was deemed necessary to have Rosanna's consent, because they were discussing issues pertaining to her welfare. Fortunately, Rosanna did not agree with the idea of confronting Jovin. She backed down. I say fortunately because I am looking at Rosanna's response as a reaction to group members' determination, a reminder that it was her life being discussed. So again she resisted moving forward; "pulled back" caising tension and frustration amongst group members.

Since group members were affected by the way her husband's relatives handled Rosanna's case, they came to a point of wanting to counteract all the atrocity against her. But when group members agreed to summon Jovin so that he could tell his part of the story to group members, Rosanna did not agree with the rest of the group. Although she tried to respond to the intimidation that she was exposed to, her spirit to fight further was broken down. And much as the group members empathized with Rosanna they could not know exactly what Rosanna felt. Since it was unpredictable as to what would protect or harm Rosanna, she wanted to be careful.

It seems at that point group members were ready to act while Rosanna was busy imagining what might be the repercussions of these actions. Rosanna's hesitation suggests fear. She was fearful, although quite uncertain of what will happen to her. Group members did not realize that there was fear on the part of their colleague. More important is the fact that it is not possible for Rosanna to precisely describe such feelings for anyone to understand what she was going through. Much as they were frustrated, it was at that point that group members decided that they are not going to stop pursuing the issue because it was not Rosanna's case that they are dealing with, it was a problem of all women as the conversation goes:

Researcher: How do you see yourself relating to the stories that we shared, including the trigger story?

P4: I think what we are discussing is not a problem of an individual person here; rather it is a serious problem facing all of us as women (*Pose*). I am agitated with the way we are treated in terms of our rights to control agricultural land. We are being discriminated and this discrimination is due to customary practices of *Haya* tribe. I consider eviction of widows without children from their late husband's *vibanjas* as serious injustice.

The statement that group members were discussing pertinent issues affecting all women in Kagera region suggests that members had begun looking at the land problem in a different way. From Rosanna's capitulation they learned to look at the land problem in a wider context because they became aware and understood how the trigger story related to their lives. I posed that question intentionally to help group members develop an understanding of what is really happening to them. I also wanted them to begin thinking about possibilities of handling such a problem. The question was:

Researcher: If you think that this is a problem facing *Haya* women what would you consider to be a better arrangement? (*the question directed to all group members*).

P8: One way is to write a will.

P2: What happens is that if your husband was truly in love with you then he indicates in a will that: "I truly loved my wife please let her stay at the *kibanja* until she dies" or "I bequeath …… to my wife and no-one even my children should interfere with this decision". So it is important to emphasize the writing of wills by husbands and what to be said in a will.

All: The problem is that not all men write wills before they die. Most of them do not see the necessity of writing a will. They take for granted that things will work out as it is supposed to be.

Researcher: Do you think there could be any way to bring about changes to women's situation?

P5: May be if there was a way of making traditional mechanisms of handling the family and land disputes operate as efficiently as it used to be in the past, the situation would have been better for us. In the past the clan council resolved all family matters including land disputes, and their decisions were highly respected. It was not common for people to discuss family issues with outsiders. You would never see anyone going to the court to report family conflicts! It is disheartening to see how things operate these days.

Members suggested alternative ways of safeguarding their rights of inheritance. For instance, they talked about the importance of writing a will and insisted about the significance of mentioning the wife's name in the will and what she is supposed to inherit. Probably they are proposing this with an assumption that the future of the wife of the deceased would be endangered if the will did not specifically mention what the wife is supposed to inherit. However, the proposed idea could only be useful if men would be willing to write wills before dying. Unfortunately, the majority of husbands do not write wills before they die. Members realized that most husbands see 'writing a will' as not important, and they do not take it seriously.

Nevertheless, members shared their views on what they thought could be a possibility of executing a change. For instance, participant 5 felt that it would have been better if the traditional mechanisms of handling family issues including land disputes could be reinstated and operate as efficiently as it used to operate. The suggestion put forward here could be interpreted as 'romanticizing the past', but the participant was putting forward a comparison of how things were operated in the past and what is happening today. The point that participant 5 was making was that land disputes and related issues were dealt with in connection to each other simultaneously; unlike today where each and every issue is compartmentalized and dealt with separately. For example, under traditional mechanisms Rosanna and Anatolia would not have to move around seeking help from Women's Councilor, Village chairman, primary court and Reconciliation Board. Instead the efficient Clan Council would have resolved their disputes. Group members felt that her point of view was valid, however, they figured out that it was necessary to acquire more insights on how the old system operated and what went wrong to make it non-functional. Therefore group members collectively agreed to invite two elders from the village for further clarifications.

Chapter Seven: Getting more insights and making decisions

After independence Tanzania developed a comprehensive political and administrative system at all levels, although only the 'village level administration' is relevant for this discussion. The highest political authority at the village level is the village assembly, which is comprised of all adults (aged 18 years and above) in a village as members. The village council and its different committees constitute the executive body, responsible for day-today issues and for solving interpersonal conflicts or special types of problems. The duties of the village chairman and the village executive secretary are to run the formal political life in the village and to represent the village in district and regional bodies.

In addition to the existence of formal administrative and political structure in the village there are specific traditional protocols that are followed. It is a common practice in many rural communities for elders to be approached as the first point of contact for issues related to traditions and customs of a community. Since our discussion on women's rights to land was related to traditions and customs of the community group, members had invited two elders to attend one of the dialogue sessions. They wished to ask them questions pertaining to customary practices as they are related to access and control of agricultural land. The village executive officer was also consulted with a number of times, so group members could make sure that they were on the right track.

While the previous discussion was focused mostly on Rosanna's episode, as the dialogue progressed there was a gradual shift of the focus, from 'land issues at the household level' to the complexity of the same at a wider society level. Group members also discussed various related factors that contributed to the persistence of these land issues at both the community and national level. Since it was a long discussion, it is not possible to present the entire conversation here. I will present only a few questions or comments to show the flow of the discussion.

During the consultation with the village elders each of the elders started with a brief talk on the Bahaya customary rules in general and described how things are different today compared to the past. Group members asked many questions seeking clarification on their individual land problems, but among issues that were brought up for discussion one was the most important. It was the fact that recently women are considered able to inherit agricultural land. Elder one insisted that it is common practice to have daughters inherit land from their parents. Participant 5, based on her own experience supported the idea that indeed changes are taking place:

P5: I want to add something to what the elder had just said. What I know, based on my own experience, is that there is no law, which prohibits women access to land; be it a daughter from her father's land or a widow from her husband's *kibanja*. If a man dies the widow is given a piece of land to feed her and the children. Widows with children are never evicted from their husbands' *vibanjas*. Even children from second or third marriage are provided with land for cultivation.

If we had maintained the rules of the past, my sisters and myself would not have been allowed to inherit our father's land. Currently my sisters and I are involved in a case whereby the grandson of an uncle was trying to defraud us of our rights. I remember during the hearing of the case, unaware of the changes in customary law, my opponent made a mistake saying "these are my grandfather's daughters and they not allowed to inherit land because they are females". That is the reason why the judgment was in our favor.

But participant 2 was not convinced the claimed changes have actually been put in place. In this question she poses to the elders, she argues that women are still denied their rights to agricultural land:

P2: If customary law allows women to inherit land how come most women, particularly widows and single unmarried women, are still denied their rights to land? .... There are some incidents where the husband dies and when children grow up they decide to throw their mother out of the home. What are your comments on this issue and what is a mother supposed to do?

P5: Many times men do not take 'writing the will' to be necessary and when it comes to clan members to make decisions, it will be the children inheriting their father's property leaving the widow empty handed, with nothing at all.

P4: In most cases the main heir is the eldest son and it so happens that after he marries his wife tends to harass his mother. In my own thinking I do not see any possibility of a widow harassing her son or daughter-in-law, if she was to be made the main heir.

P11: It is wrong to generalize that daughters-in-law are the ones always initiating conflicts between themselves and their mothers-in-law. The reverse is often true. I have seen cases where widows are very problematic and they engage in endless fights with their daughter-in-laws. They keep on commanding their sons to follow their orders, saying, 'am I not your mother, who gave birth to you, is it me or your wife?'

The idea of writing a 'will' was brought up as a solution to safeguard the 'would be widows'. Group members' argued that it was still questionable whether 'writing a will' was a sustainable solution to the land problem. While group members felt that something else, other than writing a will, should be done, elders seemed to be comfortable with writing a will as a solution. It seems elders are stuck with the mechanism that was put in place several years ago without seeing the dangers of relying on the will alone. Unfortunately, there was nothing innovative in what the elders were suggesting. It seems it was difficult for elders to think differently from what they have been shaped to believe.

Participant 4 was of the view that when the wife becomes the main heir, her being the mother, she might not harass her own children and her future in laws. Participant 11 argued against the notion that only widows are harassed by their daughter-in-laws. She said it could happen either way. In some cases, she says, mother in laws feel they have the right to exercise power over their daughter-in-laws, since they are the ones who gave birth to their sons, the future inheritors of their fathers' lands. In this case the mother feels she is in a position to treat the son and the daughter in-law the way she wishes. The way participant 4 and participants 11 are debating, it may appear as commenting on ordinary family dynamics but in reality it is not. It seems to me to be a recognition of the existence of the power relations even between female members of the family.

As group members were busy asking general questions to the elders, Rosanna felt she might as well talk about her experience and gain insights from the elders.

Elder.1: How did you let them mess you up like that?

Rosanna: (*fumbling*) it was them (Jovin and Yunis) who put me in this situation.

Elder.1: Who is Yunis anyway? Does she have any authority in issues of land? How could Yunis come into this while Sarah and her brothers are still alive? Have you ever put a complaint to anyone?

One of the elders began to respond to Rosanna's story even before hearing full details of what happened after the matanga meeting. Most likely he was surprised by the way Rosanna's case was handled. However the way he posed the question to Rosanna sounded like "why didn't you put up a fight and make noise about it? How did you allow them to play around with you?" What the elder was implying was that Rosanna had a rightful claim and he could not understand why and how distant relatives, Jovin and Yunis, could take the authority to distribute the kibanja land. Although Jovin and Yunis claimed to be the nearest relatives of the deceased, the elder doubted their claim. For him, Patrick's children have more say on their father's kibanja then anyone else. Elder 1's reaction suggests that something was wrong in the way Rosanna's case was handled by the clan council. At that point Rosanna felt it was important to let the elders know what initiatives she took to solve the problem including her consultation with the 'women's councillor', but the elder retorted:

Elder.1: What Women's Councilor! Why are you jumping all over the show? Government officials are responsible to handle your case. You just have to follow proper channels starting from the community, to the village, and to the ward. Community leaders will call upon Jovin, and if they fail to get hold of Jovin village authorities will do that.

I am quite sure that you have all the rights to access and control your husbands *kibanja* and whatever property therein. You are the wife and you had a daughter with Patrick; you have all the right to your husband's *kibanja* all your life until you die. When you die the *kibanja* goes back to the clan. One thing you need to do though is to cooperate with us (*with emphasis*) so that we deal with this problem thoroughly. I assure you we will solve it, we'll call upon Sarah and Jovin so as to get the truth of what really happened and why it happened so.

Rosanna: (*She took a deep sigh, she looked like she was weeping*)

Much as the elder believed that Government officials have a responsibility and obligation to deal with this matter he completely disregarded the existence of a 'Women's Councilor'. It is not known whether the Elder was unaware of the existence of the "Women's Councilor or was he demonstrating his gender bias? Furthermore, the Elder could not see that the system to bring justice to this problem was not working. He could not understand why Rosanna was 'jumping all over the show'! Rosanna was jumping all over because she was desperate; she wanted the problem to be solved and she tried to follow the procedures although she was not successful.

But on the other hand, the village elder was generally supportive in terms of his instructions on how Rosanna's problem should be dealt with. He emphasized that Rosanna, as the wife of the deceased and a mother had a rightful claim to the land. He also insisted that Rosanna needed to cooperate with 'them' to make sure the problem is dealt with the way it is supposed to be. The elder also felt that it was important to have a detailed account about how Patrick's children had treated Rosanna.

It would have been interesting to know what the elder meant by the term 'us' and whether the meaning of the term 'us' is in any way connected to his dismissal of the existence of the Women's Councilor. In any case his interest was more centered on Rosanna getting help from this same 'us'. Despite the fact group members were enthusiastic about dealing with Rosanna's case, she (Rosanna) became more frightened as group members continued to discuss her fate. Her crying could be interpreted as self-pity, or it could be the joy that these people are showing compassion, or she is overwhelmed by finally being treated with concern and does not have the sense of self worth to take it all in. Much as the group members are showing moral support for Rosanna, no doubt the question remains in her mind as to what extent she can depend on them. How much faith can she put in that support in terms of rectifying her situation?

As group members continued discussing issues of land transfer they referred to Rosanna's case and wanted to know whether Rosanna's granddaughter could be regarded as a rightful claim to her late mother's supposed piece of land.

P2: Let us take an example of Rosanna's case. Suppose Rosanna is allowed access to her husband's *kibanja,* what happens to the granddaughter when she (*referring to Rosanna*) dies? Would she be allowed to access the *kibanja,* considering the fact that her mother was a single parent and Rosanna became the sole caretaker of her granddaughter?

Elder.2: The answer is no. The granddaughter can only claim rights of land from her father's family.

It seems Participant 2 was thinking ahead. Particularly now that Rosanna is the caretaker of the baby, if Rosanna were to die would the grand daughter, this baby, be the rightful heir? It seems group members were concerned about the welfare of the granddaughter, given that the grandmother (Rosanna) has been evicted from her husband's kibanja. Certainly the future of the grandchild would seem to be jeopardized. According to the elders the granddaughter could only access land from her father's family. Then members raised the question whether customary rules have changed at all.

P3: According to what elders told us earlier it sounded like the law was protecting women but as we proceed with discussions it does not look like women have any security in terms of their rights to land? This is highly confusing.

Group members were trying to compare what is claimed to be the case and what is actually happening. These two never seemed to match. It was a heated discussion and from the conversation it seems group members were thrown off balance and did not know what to believe. It was difficult for them to appreciate or accept that customary rules have changed due to the way those new laws are implemented. Members also confessed ignorance about how the new procedures in the government system worked. It was difficult for them to distinguish between service charges and bribes. Much as the group members were discouraged by the way the government system operated, they tried to move on as they gained insights from each other:

P4: But I am aware that '*Baraza la usuluhishi*' (the village reconciliatory board) is an institution that has a good reputation. They do not ask for bribes, one just has to pay a small amount of money for a service charge.

P5: You are quite right about their reputation but one thing you may not be aware of is on going conflict between primary courts and the Village Reconciliatory Board. These two institutions are continuously fighting each other. Primary courts are reputed to be highly corrupt and so any institution with a good reputation like the Reconciliatory Board is a rival to them. When individuals file a case, court clerks, instead of giving them the right instructions on what is to be done, deliberately misguide their clients to the extent that it is difficult to know where you are supposed to go and whom to consult. In the end people are forced to bribe so as to get the service they need.

Elder.2: To my own thinking I see primary court magistrates are essentially employed for scheduling and rescheduling cases without considering the inconveniences caused to parties to the case. Think about expenses involved for the case, which may take up to five years before its determination. But surprisingly, people do not complain about these inconveniences.

From the conversation we see participant 4 rescuing the group when she inspired them to move on. She urged the group members that they should not be slow-witted because of their suspicions of corruption. She assured them that they could still benefit from other reputable institutions, for example the Village Reconciliatory Board. She was also aware that sometimes service charges are misinterpreted as 'bribes'. However, Participant 5, who also knew of the existence of the Village Reconciliatory Board, had more insights to share. She informed group members about the conflicts between government institutions.

According to participant 5 there is always a tension between the institutions and the clients whereby officials deliberately confuse their clients. As a consequence vulnerable clients opt to bribe officials to get things moving, out of desperation. Those who cannot afford to bribe end up dropping their claims.

It is pathetic that as traditional systems struggle to adjust to the changes that were introduced since colonial times, the institutions intended to assist them are themselves often weak and uncertain. Government officials, particularly magistrates do not appear concerned about how the economy of the country is affected by their inefficiency. Since group members did not know what to do, they resorted to keeping silent, as the conversations shows:

Elder.1: There is another remarkable problem. In a situation of reporting someone asking for bribes and if that person gets into trouble, the blame goes to the individual who has reported the wrongdoer. People in the community would point fingers at you saying: "You got so and so into trouble, you have caused so and so to be jailed, you witch". As a result one gets haunted because the whole community is against you. You become a social outcast. Therefore people do not report any culprits because there is fear among the people.

P5: Keeping quiet should not be misconstrued as 'satisfaction'; we keep quiet because we have nowhere to run to.

From the conversation above one of the elders described why sometimes people are compelled to 'keep silent'. People in communities are aware of all sorts of wrong- doers and various kinds of misconduct but they are cautious of the multiple effects of reporting the culprits. According to the opinion of one of the elders, reporting the wrongdoers may result in retaliation. People in a community tend to blame and even hate the individual who reported the wrong-doer. More serious is the fact that the hatred may involve not only individuals but rather can foster hostility between families in a community. Thus, people resort to 'keeping silent' as a strategy to avoid more trouble. Seemingly, keeping quiet does not mean that people do not know what is happening, rather, it is a sign of losing hope. People have despaired because they feel that the future of most of the rural communities in Kagera region (and probably other rural communities) is unknowable, uncertain, and tenuous.

Granted, the maintenance of social cohesion in their communities was a necessity. On top of that, it seems as if community people live in fear – the fear of confrontation, the fear of up-setting the status quo. People have despaired and they have lost hope. Due to the structure of the society and the way the system works, conformity and maintaining the status quo were safer for people than being vocal. As Freire argued, "…silence is not a genetically or ontologically determined condition of these people but the expression of the social, economic, and political structures…." (1970:30). Due to this hopelessness people respond to various problems differently. For instance the elders kept relating current events with what was said in the bible, that all these evil events were predicted thousands of years ago, and that life is like a long journey and always there are ups and downs to life. The elder suggested that recreating our relationship with God was the only solution to various problems we encounter today. However participant 2 raised a sensible question, which was probably relevant to all members. She asked whether women were supposed to stay calm and wait for their fate to take place because what is happening today was predicted in the Bible. Her message was clear; there was a need to do something.

The issue of 'keeping quiet' and 'having nowhere to run to' reminded me of the point raised in earlier discussions, that a 'Women's Councilor' exists in the village. Out of my curiosity I inquired about the role of this Women's Councilor. It was brought to the attention of the discussion group that the Women's Councilor was a government representative on women's issues and her jurisdiction covered all eight villages in this division. Although the councilor seems to hold a responsible position, according to group members, she was not doing her job as expected. It seems a gap exists between the women councilor and the village women and group members disapproved of the way she relates to them. They also lamented on how unresponsive to women's problems the councilor was. There was a feeling amongst the members that the councilor no longer identifies herself with village women and village issues. However, group members shared their feelings about what they would wish the councilor to do. Specifically, they wished to have a relationship with the Women Councilor whereby they could share their problems with her at liberty.

Despite the obvious difficulties women had accessing the Women's Councilor, group members advanced no formal complaints anywhere. Keeping silent was their best strategy irrespective of their knowledge about the existing inefficiency. Group members' felt that it was not reasonable to report one's senior in job positions. Thus, the Women Councilor, who supposedly was a link between women and the government authorities, does not really act as a 'link' anymore.

Throughout the discussion, the main issue being raised had been about changes in the customary practices. In regard to changes in customary practices pertaining to women's right to land; the observation is that it is becoming common to have a daughter inherit land from her father. In other words there is flexibility in terms of the inheritance practices. However, much as there was evidence of changing customary laws, these changes are unaccompanied by changes in attitudes of some male relatives who would not allow women to claim their rights to land. In addition, the major problem is that the change in this customary rule is largely verbal and not reinforced. It is therefore vulnerable to manipulation. Is it not high time that these customary laws be amended? Is it not necessary to bring this change to the people's awareness? Whose responsibility is it anyway?

In 1992 the Tanzanian government appointed a commission of seven people to look into matters pertaining to rights to agricultural land in the country. Particularly the Commission investigated grievances of land users from the village level and responded to their needs. One of the major issues the Presidential Commission discussed was whether to tackle customary law through a thorough overhaul of the rules, or to allow the rules to evolve. Today there is evidence that customary practices as related women's rights to land are now changing, evolving. If the traditional system is constantly reforming itself, would not this be the opportunity for government to amend the customary laws?

What can we do?

As the discussion progressed, gradually the focus of the discussion shifted from community to national level as the concern was on 'changes in customary laws', which is a statutory jurisdiction. To increase rigor to the debate of customary laws group members had a chance to look at the government documents and browse through laws and policies that affect their lives, and the discussion began to focus on what needs to be done as indicated below:

P4: We believe that traditions and culture discriminate against us as women. And those who are responsible to advise us on how to change this situation are not doing their job. We should ask the government to help us. Surely the government must be in a position to understand the situation we are in. The government should intervene in the same way they did with Nyarubanja system[9]… But today, the government has completely abolished that system; we beseech the government to intervene and do something about this problem that women are facing indefinitely.

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[9] Nyarubanja system was a feudal system of land tenure that existed in Bukoba. The pattern of holding land assumed a hierarchical character, with the King (Mukama) at the apex. The Mukama exercised rights with respect to land, allocating areas of populated *vibanja* to individuals of the ruling class. People living on these areas became tenants of the individual landholder.

Researcher: The government has intervened to a certain extent. For instance, the 1971 marriage Act recognizes the contribution of women towards the acquisition of matrimonial property, for example land. Likewise, the equal rights between men and women have also been well stipulated in 1999 Tanzanian Land Act, although there is a contradiction. When it comes to the issues of inheritance the 1999 Tanzanian Land Act emphasizes that customs and traditions should be taken into consideration. This is a little bit unclear as to what exactly the act was referring to, because customs and traditions are thought to be one factor that contributed to women's marginality. Fortunately we will have the opportunity to look at some of these documents in the next half hour today. This is why we are here today to discuss how to go about solving such a complex situation.

From the conversation we see that members were lamenting about their sufferings and were trying to see possibilities for changing their situation. Because of the seriousness of the problem they are facing, they decided to call upon the government for immediate intervention. I believe when participant 4 was referring to government she was referring to people working within the government system including development practitioners and policy makers. And participant 4 assumes that 'the government' is in a position to understand the situation these women are facing. Her assumptions are contrary to Chambers (1995; 1983) views about development practitioners. Chambers regards development practitioners as outsiders who visit rural people as tourists at their convenience. In most cases these urban-based professionals, according to Chambers, have incorrect perceptions of rural realities. Taking into consideration what Chambers is suggesting, the 'government', as referred to by participant 4, may not have the correct perception of rural women's situation.

Nevertheless the significance of participant 4's call for the government to intervene need not be over-emphasized. More important was the fact that members were aware of the fact that the government had intervened in a similar situation before.

Participant 4 cited an example of abolition of the *Nyarubanja* system. They argued that if it was possible for the government to abolish the *Nyarubanja* system why was it not possible to make a similar intervention to address women's problems of land rights?

I then briefly described changes in law that have been put in place and fortunately group members were able to browse through a government document with the title, "*Sheria ya ndoa*" or 'marriage act' and another one *mwongozo wa sheria* or 'legal guidelines'. Group members were very surprised to read about matrimonial property rights in the "*Sheria ya ndoa*" or 'marriage act' document. The Law of Marriage Act 1971 recognizes the contribution of women towards the acquisition of matrimonial property. In addition the law recognizes the possibility of each spouse having the ability to accumulate his or her own property during the duration of the marriage. While the latter provision may not have a significant impact on rural women farmers who have limited access to, and no control of, agricultural land group members were greatly surprised to learn that such acts and policies do exist.

They were equally surprised to hear that there was a new land act, which was enacted in 1999, which talks so positively about women and their rights to land. They looked at the documents with dismay, not believing their eyes. Finally they apprehended the fact that what was written as policies is not necessarily implemented. The following questions are still unanswered: Do men and women have equal rights? Is there a mechanism to make sure what is written will be implemented? Whose responsibility is this? The discussion continued:

P4: The laws are there but this is not something to make us happy because if the laws are there to protect us, why are we experiencing the same problem over and over again? The laws are there but either they are not implemented or they are not effective. As a result women continue to suffer everyday. Therefore, there is something yet to be done.

P7: The law protects us by being on books only but not in practical terms.

There is a realization that what is formally written into laws rarely reaches down to the people. While prevailing traditional notions of land rights that discriminate against women undoubtedly hindered women's access and control to land resources at the local level, the hindrance is obvious even at the national level. If laws are written but not implemented, is that not a legal restraint? How could women rely on legislative measures to address their rights to land? To this extent group members realized that laws and policies are often empty rhetoric, yet they had not decided what they want to do as an alternative. I took this opportunity to inquire as to what could be the alternative to this predicament, as this discussion shows:

Researcher: I agree with you all, that the situation is not welcoming. But it is not enough to yell and complain. You have to put your ideas together seriously and come up with an alternative to your situation, which you think makes more sense.

P2: I think, whatever implementation plan these big people have should focus on, or at least commence from the villages because these are areas where women suffer a lot in terms of denial of their rights to land. People in the villages are not informed of the laws that protect them. If women were able to acquire necessary information about these laws and how these laws operate it would have been easier for anyone with a land dispute to confidently approach whoever is dealing with such problems. This would reduce the fear of being subjected to having to offer bribes to government officials. Why would one fear if she knows she has a right and the law is there to protect her? Likewise, I see the problem of ignorance amongst our village leaders. Sometimes it is difficult to tell whether their lack of appropriate guidance is due to ignorance or whether they do it deliberately. But in any case I feel that they need some sort of education. If they are well informed and knowledgeable on how to deal with people's problems then we would not be so discouraged about approaching them with our problems.

P7: Eheee! If people would be knowledgeable about the provisions of the laws, we would not be treated the way we are currently treated by those with authority. It looks like we people living in villages have been neglected. All development arrangements are geared for cities and towns. It would have been easier for us if we had some guidelines on how to go about solving our problem, and if not, then why don't we have seminars so that we learn something. The problem is that our leaders do not involve us on those matters. We are treated as if we do not exist.

P3: I suggest that we should have someone from our village, preferably a woman, but not our Women Councilor, attend seminars on our behalf. We would expect this nominee to disseminate to us whatever she learns from the seminar. In that way we could learn various things pertaining to handling and solving the problems we are facing without any fear. If Rosanna would have the confidence envisioned here, it would not have taken her all these years to fight for her rights. Up to now it is yet to be known whether she will achieve any justice at all.

Group members have realized that the causes of the problem of land rights that they are facing are multifaceted. They have become aware of the rhetorical nature of government policies. The policies and laws ideologically speak for women but pragmatically they are contradictory. Lack of awareness of the rights that protect women was raised as another prominent problem. Group members believe that people are uninformed of their rights. Group members also think that they have been affected by rural/urban bias and lack of a committed representative from their village to genuinely present their concerns at the district and regional level. The group members were very critical of the whole situation and their central argument is that much as the law is said to be there, it does not safeguard women's rights! At this point in time they decided that they are not going to keep quiet about it. Group members did not end at lamenting only; they went ahead and gave suggestions on what needs to be done.

But before suggesting anything, they figured out that ignorance is one of the factors contributing to the persistency of the women's land problem. Since people are uninformed of the changes in the law, they argued that it is possible that even village leaders might not be aware of these changes in policies. Group members' main task then was to deal with the question 'how does one deal with ignorance'? How do people get to know that the law has changed? Education was the answer; group members thought that they (and others) needed to be educated on their rights. They also figured out that, if they were to be able to initiate a process of solving their problems, there was a need to have a responsible person to represent them and present their problems at a higher government level.

More importantly, the education on women and their rights to land should start with the village leadership. They insisted that they need some sort of guidelines showing what their rights are and how to go about solving their land issues. They believed that if everything were spelled out clearly it would be helpful at least to get a sense of what needs to be done. Group members believed that the acquisition of the knowledge about their rights would greatly increase their confidence. In other words they have realized that 'knowledge is power'. However they agreed that most of the existing problems were beyond their capacity to resolve. At that point in time group members felt it was necessary to have a discussion with the Village Executive Officer (VEO).

Let us join efforts and act

During their discussion with the VEO group members talked about their strategies, about how to begin the process to solve their problems. They noted that they needed some advice on what channels to follow before starting to implement their envisaged project. But to start the discussion, and before group members proceeded to ask their questions and informed the VEO of their decisions, I had requested the VEO to briefly share his opinion on the changes in customary practices about accessing and controlling land:

VEO: ...Based on what I know, these days females do inherit land, that is single unmarried daughters can inherit from their fathers and widows inherit from their husbands.

P5: We debated about Rosanna's case, but up to now it is still inconclusive, it is good we have you here. We really would like to have your opinion about Rosanna's episode.

VEO: I think both Rosanna and the granddaughter have the right to access and utilize whatever they need from the *kibanja*. The granddaughter is allowed to access land through her late mother's right. In any case there are people specialized in this area to whom we can always consult. What we need to do is to follow the proper channels and that is to have a letter from us (village government) introducing Rosanna to the social welfare offices. What will happen is that the social welfare office will respond wanting the village government to get a hold of Jovin and clan members who made decisions on Patrick's inheritance. This is not a problem at all; it will be done in a few days.

From the conversation the Village Executive Officer (VEO) is seen to be supporting the claim that females do inherit land. But group members brought to the VEO's attention that women are still denied their rights to land and that they have evidence to support their allegations. For Rosanna, talking again about her story could be seen as monotonous, but the whole process of dialoguing Rosanna's case was taken as a prototype of a group members' situation. And because there has been a long debate on the issue, it was easy for the group to refer to Rosanna's case whenever they had questions to ask those invited for consultation.

When the VEO heard about Rosanna case he was of the view that Rosanna and the granddaughter could claim for usufruct rights. The VEO's acceptance that Rosanna has the right to access her husband's *kibanja* augments what the elders said earlier.

While members were busy discussing Rosanna's problem, the victim herself took a deep sigh and there was a saddened look on her face. Group members showed some sympathy to Rosanna; they felt that she is highly insecure and scared; as a matter of fact she is horrified that her situation could be worse. The VEO suggested that Rosanna needs a spokesman to present her case at the social welfare offices. It was not clear why Rosanna would need someone as a spokesman. Why couldn't she present the case herself; she is the one who has been traumatized! The conversation continued:

P3: We had a question concerning the house in which Rosanna resides, do you have anything to contribute in terms of helping her, maybe through village authority, or any kind of help regarding renovation of her rundown house?

VEO: It is possible to get assistance. A similar incident occurred in our village here whereby there were houses that caught fire. We drummed to inform people about the incident, and people brought all kinds of tools and whatever was needed. Some brought hand hoes, sand, water and wood. We managed to build three houses at a go and they were completed on the same day. This shows a spirit of helping each other. Therefore, what is to be done is to organize a meeting to inform people about Rosanna's problem and we shall move from there. I think this is a good idea and I believe many people will agree to help. Rosanna belongs to this community; even if she dies today we will be responsible for her burial. Now that her house is fragmented she definitely needs help and it is our responsibility to help her.

Group members had already made a decision about the need to re-build Rosanna's house, which needed immediate attention. It seems they are checking with the Village Executive on the possibility of getting any kind of support from the community. To me, I consider this consultation as a reflection on their decisions. The VEO once again sounded very encouraging and supportive. He assured group members that the possibility is there. He insisted that helping one another in times of need was not a new thing in that community. He was very optimistic that people would be willing to help and assured members that there was a strong spirit of helping each other in that community. With that statement the VEO excused himself and assured the group that he would be available for assistance whenever group members needed him.

One thing to be noted though is that he kept emphasizing that the Village Government is obliged to take good care of its people. One wonders whether he meant what he was saying or if it was just the political language that he was obliged to use. Given the fact that these discussions were held about seven years after Rosanna lost her husband, and the fact that she consulted the village chairman, one doubts the genuineness of the VEO's concern and commitment to help. Moreover, Participant 4 had raised this matter during the development committee meetings and nothing happened. But on the other hand the group members were motivated to act as the discussion shows:

P7: To me it really does not matter whether Rosanna is or is not interested to carry on with it. What I would like to suggest is that we as a group should convene and act against women's subordination in their rights to land. Rosanna's case is just one among so many examples of women's subordination that exists in our community and we have already agreed that this problem is not an individual problem. How many cases of eviction and other kinds of women's subordination have we been discussing? We have to stand up against this subordination for the benefit of all women and for the community in general. We are not going to keep quiet, let us join efforts and let us do something.

From the discussion it seems participant 7 was way beyond Rosanna's case. She was envisioning a change for all women that have been affected by the land problem in that community. What was very impressive though, was the way the group members came to a point of wanting to do something although they have not specified exactly what they wanted to do. They have unanimously agreed that indeed they have been subordinated and so they wanted to do something about it. They convinced each other that they were ready to act. They figured out that Rosanna's fears should not make them withdraw from addressing this devastating issue. With the support from elders and the village authorities, group members wanted to get moving and were inspired not to give up. They agreed that they will use the government policies and laws that speak for them as a framework to struggle against their subordination. In addition to their determination and enthusiasm, group members also suggested they would work as a team.

P4: It is important that we work as a team here. I remember when I presented Rosanna's case in the village development committee meeting I was the only female member in that committee. We discussed Rosanna's problem for less than two minutes, and nothing happened thereafter. So long as we want to work as a group and since we have involved village authorities, I do not see why we should not get going. We may start with Rosanna's case first and embark on others as we go along.

From the conversation we see that group members suggest the need to work as a team. Participant 4 vehemently urged other members to work together, giving her experiences as a good example of lack of collective strength. She said having few women representatives in various governmental committees, which have males as a majority of members, does not help much because men tend to ignore ideas put forward by female members. What participant 4 is saying here is that even when we have women sitting in committees, they are still silenced in public fora. To the extent that group members agreed to work as a team, it was important to decide what specifically they would like to do as a strategy to change their situation as the discussion following shows:

Researcher: I appreciate your enthusiasm to act in order to change the situation but what specifically do you want to do? Do you think visiting social welfare offices, as a group will change your situation?

P7: Not really. We need to have some sort of an association, a tool within the community, which will bring women together from various communities so that we can deal with our problems collectively. It might be difficult to describe exactly what we want but we need a '*kiungo cha kutuunganisha wanawake*

> (something that will bind women together). The main objective of having this tool is to safeguard women rights.

While Participant 7's suggestion to establish an association that will function like a tool to bring women together is justified, I wanted group members to think about what their colleague has suggested. If they thought it was a great idea it was their task to explore all the relevant information about the envisioned 'tool', the pros and cons of establishing it, how it is going to function, how women would benefit from having it, how is it going to operate and so on. And since there already exist women social groups in the village I wanted them to think and figure out how different the new association would be from the existing ones:

P2: Since we have village organs that do not function to their expectation I support the idea of establishing our own 'tool', with the objective of helping women facing inheritance problems. However, we need members of the executive committee to be committed people that would strive to understand the problem at hand and ultimately take the matter to relevant institutions for action. We also need to consolidate our efforts in dealing with these problems.

P3: This organization we are planning to establish will be different from other informal groups; we need it to be officially registered. We will cooperate with our Village Executive Officer and the Ward Secretary and probably the officials from the district level; we need their support in terms of guidance.

P4: It is necessary that the District Commissioner is informed of this tool and the way it will operate. During that meeting we will inform them of the existence and the objectives of this association. But first of all let us embark on creating this 'tool', once it has been established then we can go ahead and invite the District Commissioner. We will just make sure that the Village Executive Officer, Ward Secretary, Division Secretary and probably a few village elders are available to attend that meeting.

It appears women have realized the significance of forming alliance and networks with leaders from the village level to the district level. This networking may help to link them with appropriate officials who can deal with their problems. In addition, networking would allow group members to put collective pressure on unresponsive local institutions. As usual group members consulted the VEO for advice on procedures to be followed for the establishment of a formal association and whether they were doing the right thing. The VEO was supportive:

> **VEO:** The major concern here is fighting for women's rights to land. I think it would be more meaningful if such issues would be dealt with by a group rather than by the individuals. Even Rosanna's situation would have been different by now if that collective consciousness and effort had been established before. In any collective effort people have an opportunity to contribute their ideas for the benefit of all women. I know a number of people who ended up losing their rights just because they did not know where to go and what to do. Therefore having an association will facilitate the understanding of people's rights and also encourage them to defend their rights.

Finally group members made a decision to establish an association after the apprehension of their common problems. They have realized that only a few women succeeded in having their rights to land recognized and accepted both legally and socially. As the saying goes 'walking on one foot one does not reach far'. Group members have realized that working individually towards solving a problem may not be as effective as working as a team. Therefore they decided that they need a collective effort to deal with this persistent problem. The established association was named 'Tweyambe' meaning 'solidarity'.

It was envisioned that the work of 'Tweyambe' would be to bring women together to speak out about their problems and collectively deal with them. Group members decided that the association would be a kind of 'baraza' (members of a council) something that will operate in a similar way like 'baraza la usuluhishi' (the village reconciliatory board). This 'baraza' will be comprised of women representatives from different communities and will specifically deal with women's inheritance problems and other family disputes. All women with such problems will be encouraged to talk to the executive members of the association. Subsequently, the executive members will decide whether to consult village authorities or forward the dispute to the reconciliatory board as a group. They agreed that they may have to follow the normal procedures from community level to village level and ultimately to the court, if the dispute needs to be tackled at the court. In addition group members planned to work in collaboration with village leaders to make their dream come true.

According to my earlier plans I had arranged to have a final interview to find out what group members had learned throughout the dialogue sessions. However, it was not easy to schedule the final interview as everybody was busy working on various given tasks to make sure everything was set for the newly established women's association 'Tweyambe' so it would start operating as soon as possible. Instead of this interview women shared their views when I talked to them individually, which I did whenever I had a chance to do that.

In addition to that, group members agreed to convey the message to people about the existence of the association and the objectives of having such an association in the village. Then I suggested, rather than just advertising for Tweyambe it would be important to communicate to others about how Tweyambe came into being. Thus, group members invited three representatives from three different villages. Three members volunteered to make a presentation and the dissemination took place on the last day of our dialogue sessions. Most of what group members had learned was conveyed to others during this dissemination exercise.

The first presenter (P5, Anatolia) talked briefly about how the group came into being and our research activities in general. The second presenter (P2, Hamida) talked about what group members thought they had learned from the research exercise and the significance of sharing ideas, particularly when it comes to issues of solving a problem. She mentioned how group members were amazed by the ability they demonstrated to have opinions on various issues when they had a chance to listen to the audio-tapes. The third speaker (P7, Koku) ended by advertising the association and talking about its main objectives, and how it was expected to function.

In addition to the presentation Rosanna (P1) volunteered to share her experience of the study and what she thought of the exercise. She confessed that she was impressed by the way group members responded to her concerns. She believed that if it were not for this kind of research work no one, including herself, would take a chance of dealing with her case the way the group members handled it. She never before felt so free with people who are not her relatives. She had interacted with Ba-Hangaza people and she only trusted her late husband. She has high confidence in the group and believed that she will achieve justice in the end. Rosanna's presentation was more of an appreciation and acknowledgement to the rest of the group. The dissemination exercise was important in that group members had a chance to convey what the research process meant to them. The next chapter will provide a synthesis of the major findings and conclusions of this research study.

During our discussions the women also learned many details about the nature of land ownership in Tanzania and the administrative structure of the government that addresses land issues. These details have been summarized in Appendix E.

Chapter Eight: A reflection on the study

This research study was intended to assist women who are most sharply affected by inability to access and control agricultural land, to take part in a process of determining how to change their situation. The study was accomplished through working collaboratively with village women in rural Tanzania to identify possible solutions to the land access problem.

As demonstrated in two previous chapters, women in this study actively participated in the research process where they came together, listened to each other's stories, learned from each other's experience, and made decisions and acted on decisions they took pertaining to the land tenure problem. At the end of the dialogue sessions, it was apparent that social understanding of their situation had changed and their action had been facilitated. I am saying 'social' understanding because my assessment was focused on group understanding rather than assessment of individual participants. Consequently, the sub-themes presented as findings of this study characterize a group rather than individual participants.

Much as I describe the sub-themes as representing the group, in reality the description presented may not be taken to characterize the entire group. For example, when I describe a sub theme, say analytical skills, it does not mean that all group members possessed analytical skills. Rather, it refers to one or a few individuals in the group that possessed such skills. However, all ideas and opinions were debated and consensually agreed upon by all group members. Thus, decisions made by group members represent the consensual agreement of the group rather than individual opinions. This complexity is less obvious in describing some of the organizational skills, for instance networking, since these abilities connote collective activity rather than individual activity. Below I briefly describe the stages of knowing and learning before I embark on various abilities that group members demonstrated throughout the dialogue sessions.

Stages of knowing and learning

Women broke their silence by coming together to talk about their experiences through dialogue. Within their interactive dialogue there was a shift in terms of their learning from one stage to another. I refer to this process as stages of 'knowing and learning'. At the beginning of the study each group member told of an incident, while others were listening. At the listening stage, group members started to make person-to-person connections. While listening to each other's stories group members expressed emotions such as anger, bitterness, fear and compassion, which stirred a need to know more. Group members started questioning statements and previous events as related to their problematic situation. Thus, the expression of emotional feelings was compounded by critical comments and questioning. As they were questioning, similarities of experiences were discovered and articulated, and their reality became clearer to them. Hence, the casual sharing of incidents eventually evolved into intricate analysis of women's marginalized position as it is related to land rights and ultimately group members came up with a strategy to begin work to change their situation.

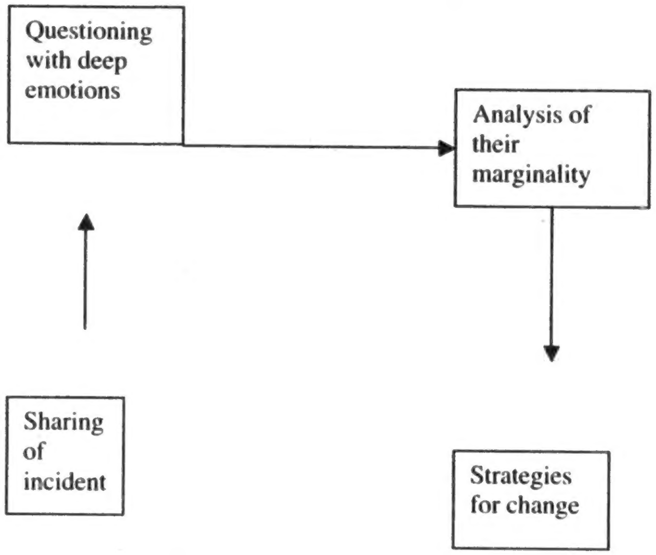
Questioning with deep emotions
Analysis of their marginality
Sharing of incident
Strategies for change

Figure 3: Stages of knowing and learning

Underlying this shift between stages of 'learning and knowing' that group members were going through, there was a strong interactive relationship, which was a foundation to the entire research process. Below I describe three kinds of interactive relationship that group members were engaged in.

Interaction between the researcher and the researched

Through friendship that I had established with the female extension agents at the village and also with my friend's parents I expanded my circle of associates. It was not difficult to establish this kind of relationship because I converse and mingle easily with others. Since the members of the community (village) accepted and treated me as one of them, I felt obliged to attend various cultural functions including wedding and funerals. In any case I wanted to get information from them and so I cared!

When we started our dialogue sessions I shared the story about the conflict between my aunts and their brother on controlling their father's land with the intention of making them feel comfortable to share their own stories, which were related in one way or another to my story. Actually they immediately began to engage in discussing something they seemed to know, as it was reflected in the kind of questions they asked and opinions they shared about the story of my aunts. This sort of conviviality at the early stage of the research process worked for all of us, because I wanted to start from where they are, that is to start our research process from their own experience.

When it was their turn to share their stories I tried to be a patient listener and receptive to their ideas and thoughts knowing that I can benefit a lot from their conversation if I in no way suggest anything they say is nonsense. Everything that they shared was from their own experience rather than from my imposition. I attentively listened to them and I was open to learn from them. It was important to show them that I respected their own thinking and intuition. Much as I was good listener in this research I managed to probe and stimulate group members to think beyond what they already know. A few questions that I asked them pushed them to discover for themselves what more they need to know. I did not ignore the fact that group members started this research process with a fund of knowledge rich in experience and detailed understanding of the problem they encounter and their social cultural setting (Gaventa, 1993; Heron, 1981).

It is in this way both group members and myself learned from each other. As Fear & Edwards argued, "real participation requires a co-generative dialogue where researchers knowledge, drawing and abstracting from multiple contexts, is combined with insider's knowledge" (1995:842). In the similar manner group members and I exchanged information but we were coming from different frames of reference as group members had the insiders knowledge resulting from their experience of the problem encountered while I shared information from my professional experience and other theoretical perspectives.

A number of authors share views on the importance of having an outsider's stimulation as a catalyst. Peter Park opines that in some situations "a community's sense of the problem may not … be consensually derived as a target of attack in the community, although there may be suffering" (1993:8). Such a situation, Park argues, requires outside stimulation for the community to accept this problem as a target. In a similar vein Reason (1994) believes that many participatory action research (PAR) projects would not occur without the initiative of someone with skill and commitment to listen to the people. Fals-Borda and Rahman (1991) add that PAR projects require a researcher who demonstrates flexibility and a readiness to learn from other's experiences. Lather (1991) has emphasized that the task of the researcher in emancipatory research should be to take away the barriers that prevents people from speaking for themselves and act as a creator of space where people speak openly on their own behalf. Travers (1997) supports the idea of assisting people to understand their situation, saying that the purpose is "to support people in making their own analyses so that they themselves can decide what is good for them" (1997:345). Thus, my role was to assist group members to reflect on their situation.

Interaction between group members

Group members began to know each other well as they recognized their common interest, as their stories and experiences converged. Gradually, the feeling of trust slowly began to develop and individual members moved from isolation to connectedness. This feeling of trust and connectedness enhanced each other's desire to be open and to understand one another in the group as communicated through their conversations (Hart, 1990; Travers, 1997).

While group members were communicating verbally there was unspoken agreement (Heron, 1981), which was mediated by body language of eyes, facial expression, gesture and emotional expression too, including sobbing, bitterness and anger. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) nonverbal channels of communication, combined with verbal communication, make up conversational interaction as full communication. They also argue that through nonverbal channels messages are transferred from one individual to another.

Heron (1981) sees this unspoken agreement expressed by non-verbal signs as 'reciprocity', which rests on what he calls 'mutuality of understanding' between two people that are communicating. He says, the interconnectedness of: our presence to each other, our eyes, facial expression, gesture of head, arms and hands, sound, and other signs is an act of knowing. However, according to Heron, "such knowing is tacit and unfocused since it does not of itself give us explicit knowledge of facts and truths about our world, and ourselves but it enables us to agree and to understand each other" (1981:25). In a similar vein, Polanyi argues that interconnectedness through non-verbal communication is a genuine communication of knowledge at the inarticulate level.

Park (1993) also shared views on the significance of connectedness between people that provides a kind of knowledge that is different from control-minded knowledge (1993:6). The way I understood 'control-minded knowledge' as used by Park, it refers to knowledge that we share at a cognitive level. However in this case Park stresses the significance of mutual support and human community, which is made possible through conversations where people talk with personal feeling and listen to each other with interest and supportiveness. We see that throughout the research process group members demonstrated empathy and sometime sympathy to one another.

All in all the interactions among and between group members stimulated discussions in which each group member had the opportunity to react to comments made by another. By working together and by consulting elders and authorities group members had the opportunity to investigate their reality, reflect on their decisions and gain more insights, which enabled them to work towards their new vision. They ultimately proposed actions to transform that reality. Once again, we see the significance of conviviality in contributing to effective sharing of experiences amongst group members.

Interaction with the 'object of knowing'

Here the 'object of knowing' refers to the problem at hand, which is 'marginal land rights'. As I have mentioned earlier, it is this common problem that linked group members together. In this research group members interacted with the 'object of knowing' through exchanging information based on their individual perspectives about the problem, and through making decisions and also through acting. Each one of them had experiential knowledge of the problem encountered. Group members came to acquire shared knowledge and information through listening to each other's story, stories about their experience of the problem of their marginal land rights.

Writing of experiential knowledge, Heron (1981) contends that experiential knowledge involves more than just bare perception. He says it involves familiarity with the encountered entity through sustained perception and interaction. He further says experiential knowing involves construing the entity with some sort of commitment. In the same manner group members were committed to understand the land tenure problem from different perspectives. The more they saw themselves capable of producing and defining their own reality, the more activated they became to change it.

One thing was obvious though. Much as group members were aware that the customary practices contributed to their problematic situation, yet there was evidence of commitment to prevailing social norms. For instance, they were aware of the hierarchical structure of the village as they consulted village elders and also government authorities in all issues that were raised during their discussions. Another example is when they consensually agreed not to consult Jovin (Rosanna's opponent) for interrogation; instead the VEO should do that on their behalf. As such, their ideas and decisions made were based on their awareness of the social cultural norms.

Thus, group members used their awareness of interpersonal interactions, which was implicit in their social cultural norms, to attend to the meaning and causes of their problem and to find ways of solving the problem. In Polanyi's language, group members relied on social norms of communal sentiments and existing hierarchical structure (subsidiary awareness) for attending to their problem. Hence, the 'interactive relationships' described above can be summarized as follows. In all kinds of interactions there is sharing of knowledge at an inarticulate (tacit) level. Through conviviality the researcher established a friendly relationship that enabled group members to open up and talk about their experiences comfortably. Furthermore the flow of communication amongst themselves was possible due to tacit personal interactions, which enabled them to share ideas, issues and insights to be able to move forward in terms of seeking solutions to their problem. Moreover, they tacitly followed hierarchy in terms of getting ideas and insights from ‘others’ in the community. The figure below summarizes these kinds of interactions, indicating that they used their tacit knowledge as the foundation of what they shared explicitly.

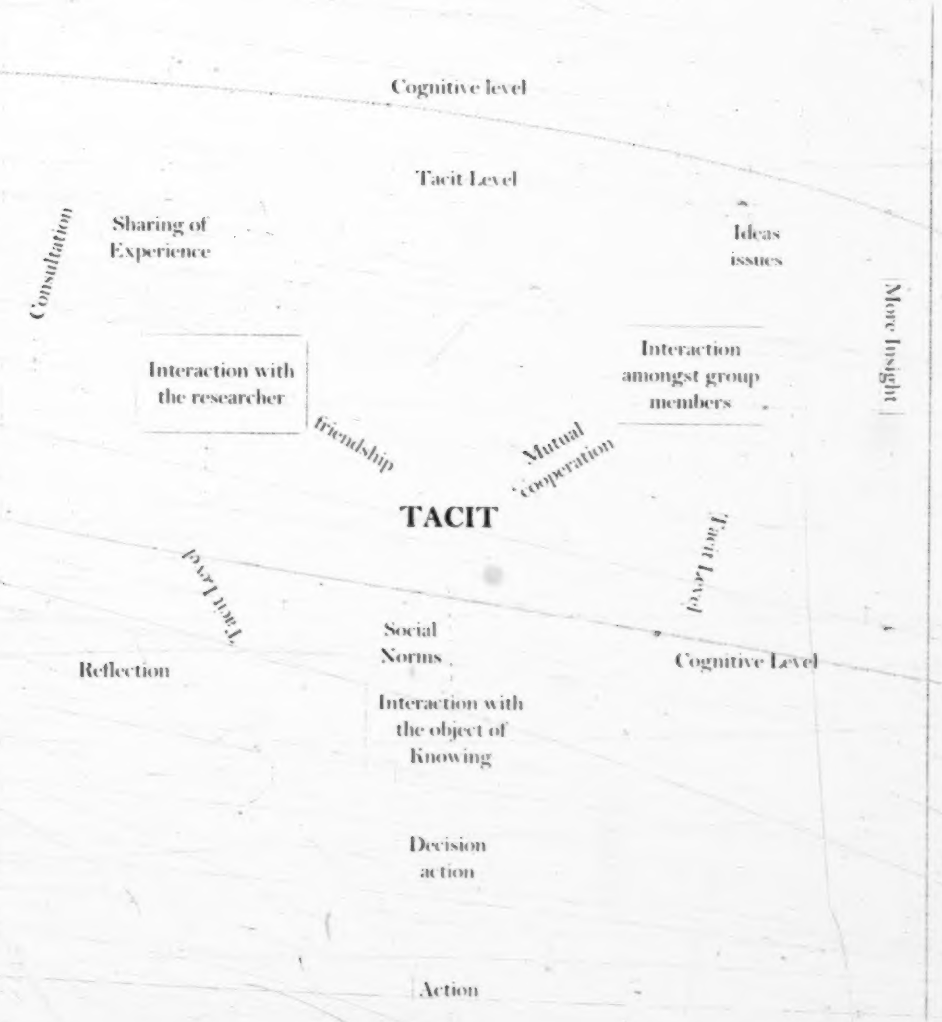
Cognitive level
Tacit Level
Consultation
Sharing of Experience
Ideas issues
More Insight
Interaction with the researcher
Interaction amongst group members
friendship
Mutual cooperation
TACIT
Tacit Level
Tacit Level
Social Norms
Reflection
Cognitive Level
Interaction with the object of Knowing
Decision action
Action

Figure 4: Interactional relationships

While the figure demonstrates the process of interacting as they engaged in dialogue, the next section describes the abilities that group members displayed as they continued thinking and discussing issues pertaining to their land tenure problem.

Analytical skills

To be analytical here refers to the ability to break up a phenomenon into its constituent elements in order to understand it. Group members were more than able to do a detailed analysis of their situation as it related to their rights to land. For instance, during the discussion of the trigger story, group members were at first puzzled; they suspected something was not right with the way Rosanna's case was handled by the clan council. Their puzzlement led to a need to understand better what really happened to Rosanna because they felt that Rosanna's eviction was not justifiable. They felt that Rosanna had a right to stay at her husband's kibanja. However in order for them to pursue their advocacy they needed facts to support their argument.

Hence, they focused on two main questions: (1) Why should Rosanna go back to Ngara, (2) What did Rosanna do after she was evicted from her husband's house? They asked not only many questions but also the right questions at the right time. Probably Rosanna would not have revealed all the details of what had happened to her if it were not for various group members' ability to probe for more information. In addition to group members' probing, they critically looked at all possible factors that might have complicated Rosanna's situation, including Rosanna's personality, her financial constraints, lack of proper information, and inefficiency of the village government.

Their analysis took another shape as group members viewed each other's land problem in a wider context by making connections between Rosanna's story and their own life situations. They figured out that it was not Rosanna's problem alone but a social problem facing many women in Bukoba.

Furthermore, group members reflected on some government documents. At this moment group members were dealing with broad social issues as they used Rosanna's episode as a prototype for the analysis of their marginality. Group members also looked at how effective measures taken by the state were to solve this prevalent problem by looking at how policies and laws related to their life situations. They were able to compare laws as they appear in text and how they are implemented, and came to conclude that women do not realize the rights that contemporary laws have promised them.

I also observed in them the ability to see connections, sharing bright and innovative ideas. For instance, as they progressed with discussion, group members suggested the reinstatement of the old traditional mechanisms of handling the family and land disputes. Their argument was that in the past the clan council resolved all family matters including land disputes, and their decision were highly respected. They felt that currently little attention was given to the cumulative or interactive effects of related problems. They thought it would be easier for them to have their problems dealt with at one place rather than going through the hassle of dealing with various parts of a problem at separate institutions. It is also through their discussions and exchange of views analytically, that they concluded that power relations exist at the household level, the community level, and at the national level.

From these and similar examples I became cognizant that group members were gradually moving beyond the common sense of what they already knew. Actually, they were exercising their analytical skills and I was impressed, by the intensity of women's involvement as they analyzed their own reality.

Critical reflection

Group members' analytical endeavors occurred simultaneously with their critical questioning and reasoning. To be critical here means looking very closely at facts provided and not taking any information or idea for granted. It involves careful judgment and or judicious evaluations. Throughout the dialogue sessions I observed that group members were evaluating how far evidence, ideas or opinions proved the point that the presenter claims. They were able to do this through critiquing each other's opinions. When one of the group members gave an opinion the rest of the group did not accept any idea or opinion passively. Instead they debated and gave serious thought to each other's views and opinions before they reach a consensual agreement.

Criticisms were helpful in various ways. When an individual gives an opinion, it is according to her/his own way of thinking, but when the idea is shared with others then there is a chance for others to reflect on it. For example when it was suggested that there was a need to summon Jovin (Rosanna's male relative), one of group members confidently disagreed with the suggestion, questioning, 'who are we to summon Jovin?' Much as the question sounded like a direct attack on the commenter, in reality it was a reflection on possible consequences of calling upon Jovin to be answerable to a group of women. Group members together started to reflect on whether their decision to summon Jovin would be helpful or harmful to Rosanna. In this regard group members were reflecting on their own thinking in the light of what another participant had said.

Similarly, it was due to Veronica's(P3) criticisms about Sarah that Rosanna remembered that she had actually contacted her stepdaughter; but Sarah had chosen to keep a deaf ear. Rosanna further confided about the letters she had written to Sarah, something that she might not have talked about if it were not for Veronica's criticisms. These events confirm to need for time for discussions to bring up alternatives and to know what pathways of action are worth pursuing. I viewed this event as a collaborative reflection on their decisions and actions.

Besides critiquing each other amongst themselves, group members were able, at times, to question the operation of institutions both at the local level and the wider society. Much as elders in rural communities (in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa) are respected and are being addressed in a special manner, group members did not hesitate to put forward their strong arguments even when it was to argue against the elders. For instance, group members critiqued the elders who were invited for consultation, particularly when one of the elders shared a view that most of the problems women face could be their fate. Group members were generally critical about the decision of the members of the clan council on Rosanna's case. They also questioned the effectiveness of the contemporary laws and efficiency of courts of laws. As group members progressed with the discussion, they became more critical of their situation. They were not afraid to confront and to dialogue with various people they consulted.

The critical questioning and reasoning was facilitated by group members' ability to see what input was relevant and significant at various stages of their discussion. For instance, when group members were contemplating possible solutions to their problem they thought of government intervention as one of the possibilities. They felt it was significant for the government to intervene because they believed that the government had the capacity to do so. They wondered why it was not possible for the government to intervene on issues of women's land rights the way it had intervened and abolished the Nyarubanja system.

The whole exercise indicates that group members were in the process of critically 'knowing their reality' (Freire, 1970; 1990). They have used their personal experiences as original sources of information for them to critically reflect upon a broad social issue. They were able to raise questions about forms of injustice that are taken for granted and to challenge forms of hierarchy that appeared to be too deeply entrenched to destabilize. As dialogue progressed, group members began to see the larger picture of the structural contradictions that caused their social, economic and political miseries.

Imaginative Creation

In addition to being analytical and critical, group members demonstrated the ability to think creatively. All during the dialogue sessions, group members were making various decisions in their endeavors to try to discover solutions for their problem. In this regard group members engaged in imagining an ideal situation and making proposals for a solution not yet realized, but reflecting their hopes. Towards the end of the dialogue sessions, group members decided to deal with the problem of ignorance as their first step to deal with their problem. They figured out that there was a need to be educated on their rights to land, and the village leadership needed to be among the learners. This idea that it is not only women but also other people, particularly the leadership, that needed to be enlightened on issues of women and their rights to land was a new realization, not one they knew from their environment. This decision indicates that group members had realized that the problem of land rights was not a women's problem but a problematic situation for the entire community.

This new realization demanded motivated women to come up with something stronger to challenge the existing inefficiencies. Then based on a shared new and passionate understanding of their situation group members stood up together and took control over what they themselves needed to work with, and in their own way. Their ideas are strikingly critical and very supportive of each other as a collective effort. Hence the establishment of solidarity group named 'Tweyambe' to bring women together and also to safeguard women's rights.

I view the women's decision to establish 'Tweyambe' as 'visionary', created by powerful imagination. I am saying this because having a solidarity group was not a new thing to them, however, the existing informal women's social groups were different from Tweyambe. While the focus of the existing informal women's groups was to provide social support as they perform various farm activities and/or during major family events such as weddings and deaths, Tweyambe, on the contrary is a tool for change whereby women come together in their struggle of seeking and identifying their own abilities and strengths to change their situation. Abilities here refer to the intellectual scrutiny of a situation; and strength refers to collective strength as they struggle to change that situation.

The whole exercise is based on "imaginative anticipation" of the working of the existing fact (solidarity group) combined with the unknown fact (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975), which is anticipated analytical work. Here I used Polanyi's notion of 'latent learning and integration' to interpret the establishment of Tweyambe. I see the creation of Tweyambe as an integration of new knowledge to what group members previously knew. I consider the social cooperation that they exercise in the existing informal social groups as 'previously learned and retained knowledge' whereby the progressive analytical work they intend to engage in is 'the newly acquired knowledge'. Thus, group members through integration of 'previously learned' knowledge with newly acquired knowledge came up with insights to form Tweyambe.

Through Tweyambe group members will have the opportunity to learn more through sharing insights as they pursue their problematic situation. Tweyambe will open up ways for women to engage in the analytical process by which structural impediments come more clearly into view. I see formation of Tweyambe as having a place for women to come together and exercise their assertion for their own independent voice. While there are possibilities of group members getting into trouble since they are challenging the existing power relations, the effect of having a group being turned down is not the same as having an individual person being exposed to the same event.

Moreover when the affected individual shares her troubles with others, group members recall their own experiences, and in the process of remembering and understanding their colleague's situation new meanings emerge. In addition emotions in terms of frustration, disappointment, or even rage at whatever happened to their fellow woman provide energy to act. George Sefa Dei views emotions as an important source of knowledge, saying, "emotions as a source of human energy, information and influence… is knowledge that is embedded in the self and speaks to compassion of the human sense and mind" (2002:125). With group members compassionate feelings they together built collective strength and confidence, which Kabeer (1994;1999) calls "power within" to pursue their colleagues concern. In any case, as I have mentioned earlier, every individual in the group is resourceful in her own way, they have different perspectives, they have different kinds of energies, they have different networking systems and if all is put together the outcome is not the same as when the individual woman struggles alone.

Hence Tweyambe was a means for women to have the opportunity to begin the work of settling disputes among themselves rather than relying on traditional rural power structures. They lost fear. They gained self-esteem. This was possible because group members had the freedom to create a solidarity group (freedom of creativity) since they had collective aspiration to do so (Miles, 1996).

Agency

According to Kabeer (1999) agency refers to the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. Agency as Giddens (1979) uses it implies action. Kabeer further elaborates the concept by saying that agency depends upon the ability of an individual to make a difference to a pre-existing state of affairs. In other words agency is the ability to intervene in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently.

There are many examples that reflect group members' agency when they attempt to address their problematic situation, such as Anatolia's (P5) efforts to fight back her male relative's intimidation and Rosanna's insistence on staying in her husband's house where she was evicted. Other instances were group interventions, such as when group members consensually agreed to renovate Rosanna's house. Likewise when they consensually agreed to establish a registered association (Tweyambe) as a solidarity group to safeguard women's rights in all vitongoji, group members demonstrated their ability to not only define their goals but also act upon them. In other words group members were exercising their agency together as a group. They took the initiative to intervene in the state of affairs to transform the social situation in which they found themselves. It is in this context that I see group members' motivation to act and their agency as power.

These progressive attempts to 'make a difference' about their situation and this social learning through such attempts reflect group members' agency. However, the exercising of 'agency' was possible largely because of the persuasion skills that some group members possessed. In many instances, group members used their persuasive skills to influence each other on a specific mission. Through their powerful arguments and their critical reasoning they were able to influence each other's passion to a determination; and hence to implement collaborative ventures.

Social solidarity

The implementation of collaborative ventures was possible because group members did not work as individuals, rather they worked as a team. With time the learning group became a community of interests. Throughout the research process group members demonstrated empathy and sympathy. They were compassionate and cared for each other. This compassionate relationship strengthened their commitment to a shared struggle. Throughout the dialogue sessions group members were involved in making decisions that affected their lives. From their shared interests they made agreements and supported each other. It was through their shared experiences and their connectedness, that they generated and sustained strong feelings of fraternity, with values of mutual aid and participation.

Through their experiences and their values they sought connections with each other and built a sense of community. Such a formation was expressed both in physical arrangements and in their thinking, not to mention their feelings and, or, emotions as expressed by their body language. When people struggle together to meet challenges and resolve problems, they add to their vulnerability their abilities to care and be cared for, their sense of connectedness. In this regard solidarity was as a source of strength for their struggle.

Social networking

To the extent that group members had reasons to work together for their own benefit, they also collaborated with people outside the learning group. As dialogue sessions progressed, group members realized that they might not be able to change the order of things from within due to their marginalized status in society. As such they did not underestimate the significance of getting advice from elders and Village Authorities, who were mostly men. These consultations and opinions from others helped to break down the 'them' and 'us' relation between the group members and the village authorities. This cooperation facilitated linkages with 'others' in the community.

Group members' collaboration did not end with consultation with leaders only. They formed social networks with their acquaintances and fellow women who did not participate in the learning group. When they invited women from other vitongoji to attend the dissemination session, they were trying to form linkages with others. When group members thought that they needed a responsible person to represent them at a higher government level they were creating a link between them and higher government authorities. The role of the representative was to provide necessary information, enabling village women to link up with the appropriate officials who could deal with their demands. Furthermore, group members also mentioned the need to create contacts with women lawyers and other related institutions located at the regional headquarters to exchange information and be informed of their rights. The motive was to build alliances and networks that would allow village women to put collective pressure on unresponsive local institutions.

I consider the above-described abilities as 'resources' that enabled group members to move from one level of understanding to another and to act on their situation. Borrowing from Kabeer (1999) who uses the term 'resources' to encompass various human and social resources, I use the same term here to refer to group members' collective mental power and their organizational capacities. These resources referred to here are possessed by group members without them knowing they have them. It could be said that they made explicit the form of intelligence, which was inarticulate (Polanyi, 1962; Schon, 1987). These resources enhanced the change in their understanding and facilitated their action as described below.

What have we achieved?

Have women developed a comprehensive understanding of their situation?

With those abilities that group members had demonstrated, I am inclined to say yes, the understanding of their situation has changed. The change in women's understanding may be characterized as a movement from a limited level of understanding to a broader and deeper level. At the beginning of the learning and dialogue sessions, each group member had knowledge about her situation as depicted by a particular event that an individual had experienced. Some group members had attempted to solve their problems without success; however, the majority of them had opted to keep silent. By interacting with their 'reality', through exchange of ideas and insights they applied their analytical skills, critical reasoning, creativity, agency, solidarity and networking to understand their situation better. At the end of the research and learning process group members became more enlightened about their situation. They realized that the situation is not just a weak right to land but their problem is an entanglement of various factors and aspects of gender relations that led to their ascribed lesser value in the society. With this new understanding they have begun the work to change their situation. The diagram below illustrates this movement:

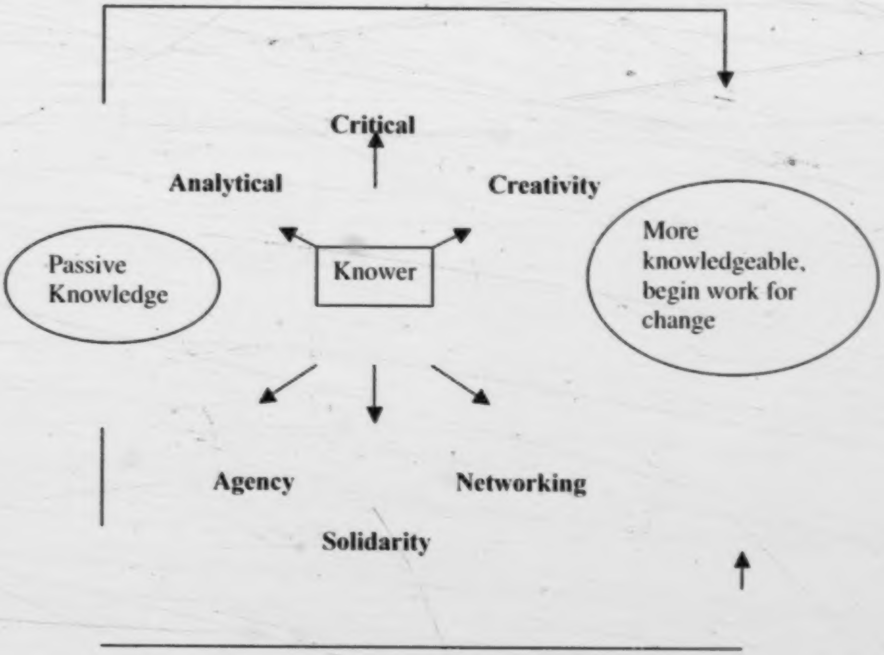
Critical
Analytical
Creativity
Passive Knowledge
Knower
More knowledgeable, begin work for change
Agency
Networking
Solidarity

Figure 5: The movement of comprehensive understanding

It could be said that women had gone through a process of awakening. Awakening refers to a state of coming to a critical awareness of one's situation. Group members were initially timid but later became stronger. They understood and participated in knowing their reality once more but on a higher and more mature level, looking at something they were aware of in a new way. It was as if the "culture of silence" was suddenly shattered. They discovered that they could speak not only about their problems but also about possibilities to change their situation. By taking part in this research, they revealed what had been denied and silenced. They revealed their self-determination and autonomy, which had been encapsulated in their condition of uneasiness and misery.

The movement or the change in terms of their understanding could be described under three dimensions. The first dimension denotes a change in knowledge; from individual experiential knowledge of the problem to recognition of the complexity of the whole issue. What was happening to group members, in Freire's language, was a verbal unveiling of their reality. They recognized and denounced their marginality by thoroughly re-evaluating and reinterpreting their own experiences. As Freire argued, "When men lack a critical understanding of their reality, apprehending it in fragments, which they do not perceive as interacting constituent elements of the whole, they cannot truly know that reality" (1970:95). Group members had adopted a critical view of their situation, that of people who question, who doubt, who investigate, and who want to illuminate the life they lived in. And with that view, group members had developed a critical understanding of the unjust structures that underpinned their marginalization and subordination. The process of unveiling of their reality would not have been possible if it were not for the intelligent skillful performance of their abilities.

The second dimension of the 'movement' denotes a change in terms of group members working individually or alone to a collective action. At the beginning group members were trapped in their powerlessness and isolation and later they were able to break this powerlessness and fought for a common goal to change their situation.

Although evidence showed that some individual women tried, and a few succeeded to solve their problems, they realized that it works better for them to work collectively, with social solidarity and interactive knowledge as fundamental elements for their empowerment.

The third dimension denotes a movement from inactivity to acting. Their critical discourse was a means of changing their situation and facts that emerged from their investigation were useful in organizing what action was to be taken. The popular saying that 'activity overcomes passivity' is relevant here. Group members explored ideas and instead of waiting to be told what to do, they established their own association - Tweyambe. They also identified allies, particularly the elders and village authorities that seemed to share beliefs, attitudes, and values that are consistent with building social justice. Exchanging views with these people, group members came up with concrete decisions about what to do and how to deal with their problems.

Conclusion

The findings of this research show that group members were potentially capable of dealing with the problem of marginal rights to land both intellectually and social-politically. Intellectually here means the intellectual comprehension of a specific situation derived from the skillful scrutiny of that situation. Social politically here refers to self-governance of the group derived from interactive activities that resulted into 'power' within the group.

This study is an embellishment of Freirian theory of education for social change. Through self and mutual learning (education) group members developed a critical understanding of their problematic situation. They established a solidarity group (Tweyambe) to be used as a tool to carry out their analytical work and to act against their subordination as it is related to their rights to land. Their decisions on how to act in a right way in a given circumstance were based on practical knowledge of the social rules that they grasped tacitly. The researcher's task was to inspire group members to reflect on the 'marginal land rights' that affected their lives and to act upon their understanding and decisions to change their situation.

Methodologically, it could be said that this entire research process has responded to the experiences and needs of disempowered rural women. I view the entire research process as an empowerment process because the knowledge generated was not given to them or the change in their understanding of their situation was not done to them, instead it was a consequence of their own effort to engage in a collective struggle to change their situation. In other words the knowledge that existed locally was generated and advanced by the local people themselves. Since the knowledge generated by group members is based on people's customs and traditions (Fals-Borda, 1991), it is more appropriate and useful in their situation. This supports Chamber's contention cited earlier that, "What cannot now be repeated is any assertion that the poor are incapable of their own analysis, or any assertion that the powerful lack the approaches and methods to enable them to undertake that analysis…There are now fewer excuses than ever before for ignoring the needs and priorities of the poor" (1997:200). In other words we have no excuse to ignore what they know.

Recommendations

Since rural women farmers have a crucial role as direct subsistence producers, reformers of land tenure systems that disadvantage women need to draw from the practical knowledge of those affected by the problem in question. Reformers need to assume the 'catalytic role' to stimulate dialogue amongst the people whom the reform is intended to benefit and tap their practical knowledge about the problem at stake. It is important to begin from where people are, in terms of what they know in order to generate a solution to a problem. Rather than imposing ideas on the beneficiaries their practical knowledge would be the foundation for the formulation of effective reform program. In the same way government departments and ministries that are interested in addressing social problems facing women should develop an intervention strategy based on knowledge of the people that have been affected by the problem in question.

The findings of this research are also useful to Adult Education and other community development disciplines in academia particularly now that there is emphasis on incorporating diverse voices for a successful mutual learning (Miles,1998; 2002; Dei, 2002). As Miles argued,

> It require not just equal access to existing programs and credentials for indigenous learners, women and people of color, but close and respectful attention and integration of indigenous, women-centered and Afro-centric perspectives and values into Adult Education's core constructions of the world" (1998:254).

This suggestion can be achieved through an adult educator's focus on the following empowerment strategies:

- Acting as 'catalysts' in research process with the intention of initiating sharing of knowledge, both tacit and explicit, among research participants
- Using dialogue among research participants on issues of their own concern as an 'entry point' for the researcher to tap local people's practical knowledge
- Weaving research participants knowledge with our academic knowledge in attempts to solve a problem

It is in this way that adult educators can become relevant to, and support the efforts of, local people's desire to learn (Miles, 1996). Hence, it is important for adult educators in academia, agriculturalists, development practitioners, women activists and policy makers to acknowledge the fact local women's knowledge is a tremendous social resource, which no society can any longer afford to undervalue (Young, 1993; Nyerere, 1968).

Further research

A number of issues need to be considered to make successful our endeavors to tap and use local peoples' practical wisdom as an alternative source of knowledge. The first and foremost is to find out in what ways local people's potential, their capabilities, their thinking can be legitimized. In particular to study the attitudes and perceptions of land reformers, experts and policy makers on issues of local knowledge and determine to what extent they draw on local peoples' knowledge when formulating development strategies. It would also be interesting, to find out how the empowerment strategies, suggested by the findings of this research study, can have an impact on community (village) decision-making processes. And to identify how such empowerment strategies can be incorporated into public policy making.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER FOR THE VILLAGE GOVERNMENT

SOCIAL LEARNING FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am sending you information about a research study called 'Social learning for empowerment'. I am a doctoral student in Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta. I have practiced as an Agricultural Officer for 20 years. The purpose of this study is to explore the capacity of women to develop an understanding of their situation as is related to their rights to agricultural land. The study involves a learning process by a group of women farmers that are single and heads of households who have been disinherited or is facing a problem either of accessing or controlling a piece of land that she cultivates.

Those interested to take part in this research study will work in close collaboration with myself searching information and sharing ideas about their situation and how to solve the land problem they are facing. The study also requires some input from village elders in terms of them (elders) providing information on procedures of land acquisition and use rights. I hereby kindly request your office to:

- Provide the enclosed information sheet to women that are single and heads of households for them to read and decide whether they would like to participate in this research study.

It is expected that at the end of this research study research participants would be in a position to suggest and implement some actions as deemed important to them based on that understanding.

Thank you for your time and for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Christine Helena Mhina
Educational Policy Studies - University of Alberta

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Social Learning for women's empowerment
Investigator: Christine Helena Mhina
Doctoral Student
Educational Policy Studies
University of Alberta

This consent form gives the basic idea of what the research project is about and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read carefully and to understand this information.

Purpose of the project:

A doctoral student in Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta is conducting this research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the capacity of women to develop an understanding of their situation as is related to their rights to agricultural land.

Study procedure:

The research process will be conducted in close collaboration between you as research participants and myself as the principal investigator (researcher). As research participants, you will be required to participate in overall research process that will include the following:

- To take part in the process of data collection through sharing of experiences and perceptions of being farmers with restricted accessibility to land.
- To take part in the analysis of your situation through dialoguing and reflecting on the acquired information from elders, members of learning group, documents and from various events.
- Deciding on what actions to be taken thereafter.

The main technique that will be used for data collection and analysis will be dialoguing and consultations from other members of the community if a need may arise. You and me will set for a time and place that is convenient for you. The research process will also involve interviewing towards the end of the learning session to get your views on the learning process.

Confidentiality:

Information gathered in this study will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not appear anywhere in the study. The researcher will not discuss your problems and concerns with other people.

Risks and benefits:

Taking part in this study will have no financial benefit to you and it may be costly in terms of your time. However, based on the results of this study, it is hoped that, you will develop a clear understanding of your position in the society and you will be in a position to suggest and implement some actions geared to change the situation you are in as of now. It is also hoped that in the long-term, you will in a position to empower other marginalized women and assist them to improve their situations.

I shall make sure that taking part in this study does not result in any social-political risks that will jeopardize the welfare of the participants. In any case we shall consult village elders and other leaders on whatever actions that we plan to implement.

Societal awareness:

The village council has been notified on the intent for you to be approached to take part in this study. The final decision, however, is entirely up to you. You are free to choose to or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part, you can leave the study at any time by telling the researcher of your wishes. You can also ask the researcher to leave any information out of the study report. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study at any time, please contact the researcher, Christine Helena Mhina, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Seed Multiplication Office, Dar-Es-Salaam.

My signature on this form indicates that I have understood to my satisfaction the information regarding my participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject.

Name of research participant	Signature of research participant
Name of Researcher	Signature of Researcher

APPENDIX C

PROTOCOL

1. Initial individual interview

- Tell me about the land problem you are experiencing
- Relationship of other problems with the land access problem
- Period of time during which you have been experiencing this problem
- Attempts to solve the land access problem
- Possibilities of changing or not changing women's marginalization in land issues
- Interest to join a group of other women to discuss problems of accessing land and possible alternatives to problems

2. Naming the problem

(a) After listening to a 'trigger story' from one of the participants

- Discussion of the most significant issues arising from the story
- Relationship of the story to one's own life

3. Reflections

- Comparison of one's situation with others within the group
- Discussion of possible root causes of her problems
- Participants knowledge about land laws
- Comparison of the situation of women in the past and present
- Attempts to solve the problem
- Reasons for choice of particular strategy

4. Exploring alternative

- Possibility of changing the situation
- Alternative options
- Implementation of the strategies
- Positive and negative consequences of those strategies

5. My observation of the process of learning

- Changes of ideas in their discussions
- Changes in their way of interpreting their experiences
- Resistance or struggle for a change
- New skills that participants have gained in terms of investigating about their problem and taking action.
- Have they developed a comprehensive understanding of their situation?

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANTS, PSEUDONYMS AND DESCRIPTIONS

P1. Rosana. Widow, no schooling, tells the trigger story.

P2. Hamida, Widow, two years of formal schooling.

P3. Veronica. Widow. Attended adult education classes for a year.

P4. Egi. Unmarried, twelve years schooling, extension agent, works with a village council.

P5. Anatolia. Married, eight years of formal schooling, retired teacher.

P6. Theo. Divorced, four years of schooling, involved with a local women's organization.

P7. Koku. Widow, fourteen years of schooling.

P8. Heriana. Widow, no schooling.

P9. Fortunata. Married, four years of schooling.

P10. Fatuma. Widow, no schooling.

APPENDIX E

LAND AND ADMINISTRATIVE KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED

All land in Tanzania mainland is public land that is vested in the President as trustee on behalf of all citizens of Tanzania. Land is classified as reserved land (reserved for forests and national parks); village land (land that falls under the jurisdiction of existing registered or non-registered villages); and general land (all the rest). My focus here will be on policies and laws that affect the rural society.

The land titles that can be held by any person in Tanzania are of two types: (i) the granted right of occupancy and (ii) the deemed right of occupancy (World Bank, 1994). The granted right of occupancy is a general land grant with a provision of a certificate of occupancy for a term of one to ninety-nine years. It is given by state authorities, either by the President or by specified officials. The second type of right of occupancy, the deemed right of occupancy is the most common type of land holding in Tanzania. The indigenous population, and majority smallholder farmers in rural areas hold their land under the deemed right of occupancy. Subject to continuous use and the approval of the village or other communal authorities, this right is held in perpetuity. Consequently, under deemed right of occupancy, people claim rights to land according to the rules and customs of the area in which the land is situated (refer to page 55 above).

Notwithstanding, during the colonial rule, all customary practices regarding land allocation and disposition were codified and were declared as 'customary laws', as announced through the Local Customary Law (Declaration No. 4) order, 1963. Thus, after this codification the customary practices of various tribes lost the fluidity and flexibility they had in the past. Except for this codification, following independence in

1961, the existing forms of land tenure systems continued until 1967 when the policy on land tenure was restructured and government control through the village administration was reinforced.

The first legislation was the Village Act of 1975 which was enacted to clarify the position of the villages. Provision was made for the registration and administration of villages. The second relevant piece of legislation was the Local Government (District Authorities) Act, 1982, which gave power on all village matters to the village council. Provision was made for every village to have an assembly (consisting of all adult residents) that would elect a council (a body corporate with a wide range of functions and powers) that would elect its office bearers and set up its committees (Coldham, 1995). In addition to Local Government Act of 1982, the National Agricultural Policy of 1983 (revised in 1994) outlined a system under which villages are allocated land under a 999-year lease. With these three pieces of legislation, user rights were administered within the village administration and village leaders had the authority and control rights over village land.

For the purposes of administration, the organizational structure established was as follows: Village - Ward – Division – District – Regional level – National level. In each village a number of different clans are found. The clans are governed by their elders (for example the clan council). These elders deal mainly with division of land and with disputes over rights to land. They also supervise and influence the behavior of their younger clan members. Much as villages and clans were, until independence, the smallest administrative units, today they are not treated as formal administrative units by the national government. Since the mid 60's the administrative structure has been changed and the Ward (covering 10,000 to 40,000 people) became the lowest level of administration responsible for all formal local government activ[illegible]

While in the existing administrative structure there are local government and party officials (the ruling party CCM) dealing with various tasks and responsibilities including land matters, the judiciary is the principal machinery for settling land disputes and the primary court is the axis of the entire system, starting from the level of the Ward going upwards. The primary court has original jurisdiction over all land governed by Customary Law and also has concurrent jurisdiction in land matters other than granted rights of occupancy over land. Thus practically all disputes relating to rural land must commence in the primary court. Decisions of the primary courts may be appealed to the District Court then to the High Court and finally to the Court of Appeal.

The existence of multiple institutions (clan council, village, judiciary, other government and party officials) dealing with land disputes with overlapping powers and jurisdictions, has led to ambiguity and uncertainty in land allocation and administration in rural Tanzania.